



## THE "GREAT MACKINLAY."

### KILMARNOCK'S MOST POPULAR PREACHER.

BY THE REV. D. LANDSBOROUGH.

Kilmarnock may have had preachers more able and more learned than Dr Mackinlay, but undoubtedly he was the most popular. Burns may be adduced as a witness. He styles him the "Great Mackinlay." It may be the poet was not in these words expressing his own opinion, but undoubtedly he was voicing what he believed to be the verdict of the public.

Last week I was present and conducted the service at the funeral of Miss Mackinlay, the last of Dr Mackinlay's family, also the last of his descendants. His son had a child who died while young. Miss Mackinlay was buried in the High Churchyard in the family burying-place of her brother. She was eighty-two years of age. It is suitable at such a time to give some reminiscences of the famous Doctor, so long minister of the Laigh Kirk.

Dr Mackinlay was born at Douglas, in Lanarkshire, in the December of 1756. He was educated by good teachers, which he so improved that when his College course was finished he was qualified for good appointments as a tutor and was so engaged, first in the family of a Mr Logan and next in that of Sir William Cunningham, of Auchenskeigh, Ayrshire. The latter gentleman so spoke in his favour to the Earl of Glencairn, and in 1785 his Lordship presented him to the Second Charge of the Laigh Kirk. The people were delighted, for they knew his pulpit gifts, as his first sermon had been delivered in the Church of Riccarton. Thus all appeared bright. But "there is often a slip between the cup and the lip." Let us look at the state of the Scottish Church at this time.

At this period heartless, soulless, and unchristlike Moderatism was at its height. This system seldom showed life save when associating with infidels, consorting with and pleasing patrons, hunting after stipends, and when it had an opportunity of rending and tearing the body of Christ—that is His Church, and trampling it in the mud with its hoof of iron. Does anyone think I express myself too strongly?—I can scarcely do so. Witness the following quotations from the History of Kilmarnock, by its historian, Mr M'Kay. They are made in connection with the forced settlement of the Rev. (?) Mr Lindsay to the Laigh Kirk in 1764.—"None of the session signed the call; only three heads of families signed the concurrence; and the elders, twenty in number, presented a remonstrance against the proceedings." The case was carried to the General Assembly, which reverend (?) Court "sustained the presentation and ordered the Presbytery to proceed without delay." The settlement took place amid the greatest riot ever seen in Kilmarnock. For taking part in it "ten of the ring-leaders were seized, imprisoned and tried." At the trial "seven were acquitted by the jury, and the first three found guilty and sentenced to be imprisoned for a month and whipt through the streets of Ayr, and to find caution for keeping the peace, and a good behaviour for a twelve-month."



Certainly this was a perversion of justice. It was the ministers who were specially guilty. They should have been whipped through the streets of Kilmarnock.

The settlement of Dr Mackinlay had almost been accompanied by a second and similar riot.

In the interval betwixt the presentation and the settlement, the Earl had heard something about the young minister which displeased him. The result was that before the meeting of Presbytery he gave a second presentation. The people did not hear of this till late in the day previous to the meeting of Presbytery. At once all Kilmarnock was in commotion. Plans were matured during the night, and early next morning the people in a mass marched to the gate of the manse and sent a deputation to Mr Robertson (minister of the First Charge), who it was reported had the presentation to Mr Brown in his possession, requesting him to give up to them that document. Mr Robertson, terrified by the sight of the crowd at the gate, and overcome by the fears and entreaties of his family, told them that he had not the presentation, and informed them where they might get it, on its way down to Irvine. Accordingly, the people secured the presentation in favour of Mr Brown ere it reached the hands of the Presbytery. After this they sent a deputation to the Earl of Glencairn who, when he saw their determined spirit, revoked the second presentation."—*Memoir*.

The condition of the Laigh Kirk at this time was by no means prosperous. No wonder. The violent settlement of 1764 had led to the forming of two Secession congregations—Gallows Knowe and Clerk's Lane. Mr Robertson, the minister of the First Charge of the Laigh Kirk, may have been respectable in character, but of him we read in the *Memoir*—"Though he had only one sermon in the week to compose, he had discourses just sufficient to serve for about three years, and these were exactly half an hour in length [thought very short in 1843; the average length of a sermon then being fifty minutes—D. L.] and read over and over *seriatim*. . . . In consequence a very small number attended the Low Church. Sometimes, it is said, none in the galleries. . . . But the High Church—the minister of which was the Rev. John Russel—was filled," though it accommodated more then than now, as the stairs to the gallery were outside of the church. The passages also were filled. The father of the late Mr Thos. Cuthbertson, sen., was in the habit of mentioning that when he joined the congregation, in the time of Mr Oliphant, the predecessor of Mr Russel, he could not for a considerable time get a seat, and when not favoured by a friend, he sat on the gallery stairs, then inside of the church, afterwards, to give more accomodation, removed to the outside. How great the change that at once came over the Laigh Kirk! Ere Dr Mackinlay had been settled for a year the church was filled, while at the Communion the most gifted ministers in the West of Scotland, such as Drs Balfour and Love of Glasgow, assisted, and persons came from a distance of ten and even twenty miles, and there were more than a dozen tables. Such a minister as Dr Mackinlay was, of course, much disliked by the Moderates, and they would gladly have got rid of him. An opportunity seemed to present itself only three years after his

settlement. A Mr Duncan was to be forced upon Ardrossan parish as minister, and the Presbytery, knowing the views of Dr Mackinlay, resolved to force him to preside at the deed of violence. What was he to do? In his distress an old minister gave him a shrewd advice: "Go to England, Ireland, or France; but whatever you do get out of the way." The advice was taken. Dr Mackinlay had a sympathiser in Mr Russel of the High Church. They procured ponies and met at Ayr, from whence they rode by Dumfries, Carlisle, Penrith to Carleton-upon-Trent. There they left their animals and proceeded by coach to London. The Presbytery of course sent to Dr Mackinlay a letter addressed to Kilmarnock, and again, having discovered that he had gone to London, a second, addressed to a minister whom they considered certain to know where the fugitive was residing; but the Doctor had so arranged that he got neither of the letters. In London he and his companion met the celebrated John Newton, and also Thos. Scott, the Commentator, and they travelled by coach with Dr Paley. Dr Mackinlay also preached every Sabbath. At the end of two months they returned to Kilmarnock. The Presbytery would have prosecuted Dr Mackinlay, but the settlement at Ardrossan had aroused so much indignation that, like the Jews of old, "they feared the people," and Dr Mackinlay escaped.

The reason of Doctor Mackinlay's popularity is well stated in the *History of Kilmarnock*:—"As a preacher few divines have been more generally admired and esteemed. The sweetness and compass of his voice imparted charm to all his sentiments, and the elegance and warmth of his manner marked him as one peculiarly fitted for his sacred calling." A gentleman who has frequently heard the Doctor informs me that his sermons were long, divided into many heads, at times as many as a dozen, and that his applications was often threefold—(1) to the young, (2) the middle aged, and (3) the old. My late friend, John Parker, Esq., of Assloss, had a great love for what is pointed and pithy, and to him the applications were too general. He said the Doctor had only two classes—saints and sinners.

The Doctor was of a retiring disposition, and saw little company, though when he came out he seems to have been able to make himself sufficiently agreeable. He had, of course, many calls from other congregations. These began early. He had only been six years in Kilmarnock when he was chosen to be minister of the New (now Middle) Parish Church, Greenock, and other invitations followed. That to Greenock was tempting, as the church was handsome, the congregation large, the town increasing, and the stipend fully a hundred pounds greater than that of the Second Charge, Kilmarnock, or even the First; yet Dr Mackinlay refused all of them. He gave as his reason that "he had been settled at Kilmarnock by the earnest desire of the people, that to them he was much attached, that it afforded a large field of usefulness, and that his labours had been blessed to not a few." This decision was the more remarkable, as, notwithstanding his great popularity and success as a minister, the First Charge twice became vacant without his being appointed, and it was only when in 1808 it became vacant for the third time he received the presentation, and that as a



result of a petition from the inhabitants. Such was Patronage. Few men would have submitted quietly to such treatment.

In 1825, the fortieth year of his ministry, his congregation presented him with a handsome service of plate. On completing, in 1836, the fiftieth year, a congregational banquet, attended by upwards of five hundred persons, was held in honour of the event. On this occasion a congregational library was formed and named "The Mackinlay Library."

The Doctor was now an old man; but he was still able to preach. This year (1836), however, St. Marnock's Church was opened, and the arrangement made was that it would be supplied by the ministers of the Laigh Kirk, a collegiate charge. As this implied preaching twice every Sabbath, and both churches were large, it was thought desirable that the Doctor should have an assistant. The person chosen was the Rev. James Stevenson, afterwards minister of Newton, Ayr, who married Dr Mackinlay's eldest daughter. The Doctor himself still continued to preach "not unfrequently half a day and sometimes even a whole day, and with unabated vigour and liveliness."

I give two anecdotes of his old age which I received from his family. He was so much impressed by the increasing number of those who went to no church, and felt so deeply the necessity of seeking to reach them, that he resolved, by preaching in the open air, to give such a movement the weight of his example. This he carried out—I believe at the Cross of Kilmarnock. The other was somewhat similar. He was so much impressed by the increase in the number of drunkards (a change in the excise duties having begun to make

whisky, and not ale as previously, the national drink (see notices in the Old Statistical Account.—D. L.) that he resolved in no way to give drinking the weight of his example. He had during almost all his life been in the habit of taking a tumbler of toddy after supper—latterly giving a glass to each of the members of his family and retaining two himself. When eighty-two years of age he gave up the practice. His family added that they believed, in consequence of his age, he suffered in health from both of these actions. They all the more showed the fervour of his zeal. I may add that his son was like-minded with his father. When by weak health compelled to retire from the ministry at Wellpark he resided for a time at Saltcoats. There, in the poorer parts of the town, he conducted weekly evangelistic meetings. At these, the writer, then a student, had the pleasure of co-operating, while the ladies of my father's congregation efficiently visited.

On the first Sabbath of February, 1841, Dr Mackinlay preached for the last time, doing so "with great animation." On the Wednesday he died. It may be mentioned that he had shown a deep interest in the "Ten Years' Conflict." The results of this feat on his part was that when the Disruption took place, with one exception, all the session of the Laigh Kirk joined the Free Church.



Man is weak. Dr Mackinlay at the age of nineteen entered into a written covenant with God (given fully in his Memoir) and this he renewed at every Communion (then yearly), yet on one occasion he acted so foolishly as almost to create a scandal. Again he refused to accept calls to congregations where his stipend would be much larger than in Kilmarnock, yet he was so parsimonious that the money he left at his death was so considerable that it is said that it amounted to more than all that he had drawn as stipend, apart from interest.

A volume of Dr Mackinlay's sermons was published by his son in 1843; but the sermons give no more idea of his pulpit power than do the published sermons of the renowned Whitfield.

A portrait of the Doctor was painted by Mr Tannoek; an engraving of it is prefixed to the volume of the sermons.

A sun dial was made, seventy years ago, by Mr Boyd, Kilmaurs. It was purchased by the redoubtable Hugh Craig and stood for long in his garden at Wallacebank. At the sale after his death it was bought by his neighbour, the late Mr Hamilton, town clerk, and did similar duty in his garden. Latterly it was presented to the town by his son, who was long, like his father, clerk to Kilmarnock. It has been placed in the Kay Park, near Burns's Monument. On it there are several busts cut on the stone. Mr Hamilton informs me that the one facing Kay Park Crescent represents Dr Mackinlay.

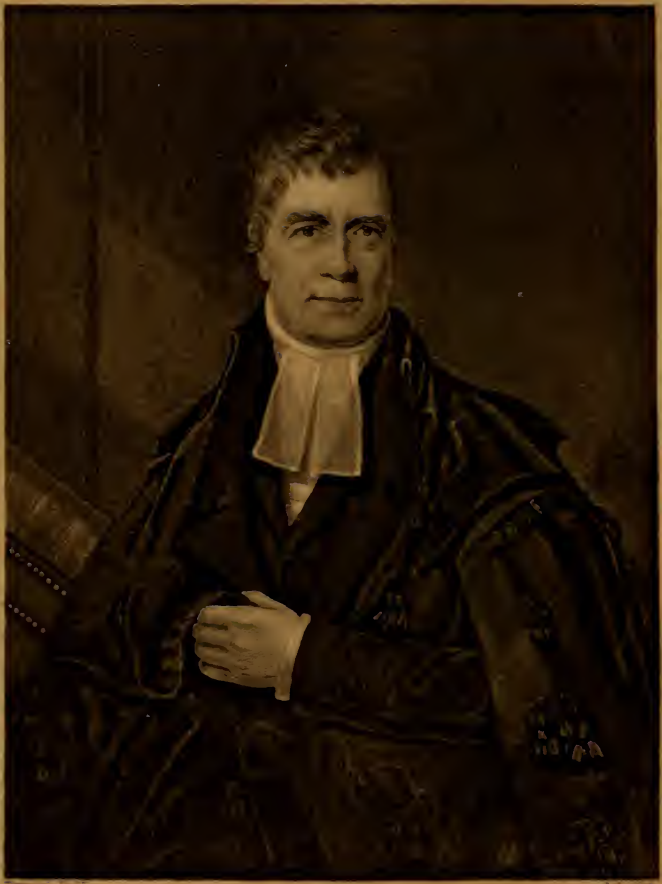
The family of the Doctor that lived to maturity were the Rev. James Mackinlay, who was minister of Weirpark Free Church, Glasgow, whose widow still survives; a daughter, who was married to the Rev. James Stevenson, minister of Newton Free Church, Ayr; and Miss Mackinlay. All are now gone.

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Thomas F. Torrance



JAMES MACKINLAY D.D.

Published by John Davie Kilmarnock



# SELECT SERMONS.

BY THE LATE

REV. JAMES MACKINLAY, D.D.,

MINISTER OF THE FIRST CHARGE OF THE LOW CHURCH PARISH OF KILMARNOCK.

WITH A

MEMOIR BY HIS SON;

AND PUBLISHED UNDER HIS SUPERINTENDENCE.

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## P R E F A C E.

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THE Discourses which compose this volume, are published at the earnest request of many who heard them preached with pleasure and with profit, and expressed their conviction, that, by the divine blessing, they were calculated to impress the truths of the gospel upon the heart, and lead sinners to Christ. If, in truth, they prove the means of converting one unregenerate offender, comforting any mourner in Zion, or imparting light to any walking in darkness and perplexity, they will secure the great object for which they now appear before the world, and for which, we are persuaded, they were composed. In reference to the Memoir, it may be stated, that it was printed before the solemn resolution was formed by so many ministers, of leaving the Established Church of Scotland, provided no adequate remedy were granted for their grievances. We commend the volume to the candid and prayerful



perusal of those into whose hands it may fall, at the same time expressing our conviction, that the discourses are not presented to them in so perfect a form as they would have assumed, had they been published under the superintendence of their venerable author.

JAMES MACKINLAY.

GLASGOW, *June*, 1843.

# MEMOIR

OF THE

REV. JAMES MACKINLAY, D. D.

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THE subject of the following memoir was born at Gateside, in the parish of Douglas, Lanarkshire, December 22, 1756. His father's name was James Mackinlay, and his mother's Grace Wilson. They had six children, John, Robert, Marion, James, George, and William. His father was an elder of the Church, and both his parents were distinguished for their deep and fervent piety. Having dedicated their children to the Lord by baptism, they were mindful of their solemn vows, and endeavoured, with the utmost earnestness and perseverance, to instruct their children in the knowledge of the truth, and instil into their minds the principles and sentiments which alone can guide us safely through time, and bring us at last to glory. All the members of the family were well grounded in the Shorter Catechism, trained to read the Bible, and accustomed, morning and evening, to draw near to the throne of grace. All of them had certain places, either in the house or in the buildings connected with it, to which, by the command of the head of the family, they were bound to retire, and pour out at the appointed time their hearts before God. Such an effect had the example and instructions of their employers, that few servants of the family ever left the house without being seriously and deeply impressed with the importance and

necessity of minding the one thing needful. They might enter the family careless and indifferent, but such they did not depart.

The prayerful instructions of his parents had an early and a lasting influence upon their son, James. He never could recollect the time when he was altogether ignorant and regardless of God. From the earliest dawn of reason, he was visited with convictions of sin, and had earnest desires to please God in all his ways. His apprehensions of the mode of salvation were at first erroneous and unscriptural. He vainly imagined that he could merit salvation by his good deeds, and that if he read his Bible, prayed every morning and evening, obeyed his parents, and spoke the truth, God could not but have mercy and bestow upon him every spiritual and saving blessing. When, however, he was about twelve years of age, he was led to adopt more correct views of the truth, by reading Stoddard's "Guide to Christ," and Guthrie's "Trial of a Saving Interest in Christ." These books, which have been blessed to many, showed him that men are wholly depraved, and dead in sin; that they can never, by any thing they can do or suffer, merit the least mercy from God; and that they are saved from first to last through the merits of Christ. Hence, he was led to cast away all hope, and all confidence in himself, and to make Christ his wisdom, and righteousness, and strength. At this early period we are to date the commencement of his life as a true disciple and follower of Jesus. After this, he had no doubt times of spiritual declension and revival, of falling and repenting, but still he held on his way Zionward, striving, with some good degree of success, to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. His experience shows what will be found to hold true universally, that a sinner can never find real peace and pleasure in serving God, till brought by divine grace utterly to despair of ever deserving the smallest



mercy from God, and led to depend simply, and with his whole heart, on the infinitely precious merits of Immanuel. Many there are who work that they may win salvation, who, though theoretically right regarding the mode of a sinner's justification, are practically wrong, going about, in some degree unconsciously and unintentionally, to establish by their tears and penitence—their prayers and alms—a righteousness of their own. Such will never be found rejoicing in God, going on with alacrity and delight in the paths of new obedience, till they are enlightened to see that their duty is to receive all freely from God in Christ, and in token of their gratitude and love, to devote themselves without reservation to his service.

The father of the subject of the present memoir being in comfortable and easy circumstances, determined to give an opportunity to some of his sons to follow a learned profession. One day, therefore, after they were in some measure able to judge for themselves, he collected them together, stated his intention, and inquired whether any of them were disposed to prosecute their studies. He found only two, James and George, desirous to do so—James expressing his strong desire to become a minister of the gospel, and George being anxious to devote himself to the medical profession. The career of the latter was short and mournful. After completing his studies, and obtaining his diploma, he went on board a man-of-war as an assistant surgeon, and in a few weeks caught fever and died; cut down suddenly, while entering, with all the ardour and hope of youth, on the discharge of the duties of the profession he had chosen. He was a man of respectable talents, remarkable for his kind and affectionate dispositions, and greatly beloved by his friends.

Both James and George were sent to the parish school of Douglas, and thereafter to that of Lanark—

the latter being then taught (as it was for more than fifty years,) by Mr. Thompson, brother-in-law to the author of "The Seasons," and a celebrated classical teacher in those days. Under him, James, especially, made great proficiency. As a proof of this, it may be mentioned, that he and Sir Henry Stewart, (who afterwards, I believe, published an edition of Sallust,) and Gillies, who became the rector of an academy in England, always kept at the head of the class. None of these three was ever found below the third place from the head.

James went to Glasgow College, 8th November, 1773, and joined the Greek and Logic classes. Mr. Moore, professor of Greek, was at that time unable to teach the class, but his place was supplied by Mr. John Young, a man distinguished for his knowledge of Greek, and his skill in instructing youth, and who became the successor of Moore. Both of them gave him certificates, bearing ample testimony to his knowledge of the Greek language, and diligent application to study. Mr. Clow, the same individual who was chosen in preference to the celebrated Edmund Burke, was professor of Logic; but, during the greater part of the session, his place was efficiently and most ably supplied by Mr. Jardine, who succeeded him when he died. Clow does not appear to have been a man of great talent, or of extensive learning; but his prayers, in opening his class, were serious, fervent, and deeply impressive.

In his second session at College, he joined Dr. Reid's class, November 2, 1774. From the instructions of this justly celebrated man, he derived great benefit, and in after times always spoke of him with the highest veneration. He was a man much revered by his students. He was seldom seen to smile, and was often observed pacing up and down between the public library and the profes-

sors' houses, apparently in profound thought. His earnestness at the dispensation of the Sacrament in the College Hall, at which he once presided, was never forgotten by the subject of this memoir. In his address to the communicants, he seemed to pour out his whole soul; and while speaking of the dying love of Christ, tears were observed running down his cheeks, showing the intensity of his inward emotion. Altogether, he was not only a great man, a patient, modest, and deep thinker, but a man in whom there appeared to be the fear and love of God.

About this time, while thus prosecuting his studies, he seems to have felt, more than ever, the importance and necessity of devoting himself entirely to God; for in July, 1775, he made a written covenant with God, which he renewed in July, 1776, and as often as he partook of the Sacrament. The following is the covenant which he then made with God:—

“O Lord, I am by nature, and also by innumerable transgressions, a lost and ruined creature. Though I had a covenant with thee sealed by baptism, yet I have lived a long time insensible to my obligations, and, as it were, without God in the world. Blessed be thy name, I have reason to conclude that thou hast made me sensible of my state, and of the satisfying relief thou hast provided in Christ Jesus. Thou offerest the same to me freely in thy word, and now thou hast determined my heart to go out after Christ, in the way of this new Covenant. In order that I may attain unto that establishment of mind in this matter, which would be to my unspeakable comfort, and the praise of thy grace, I, unworthy as I am, do declare, that I believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and only Saviour of sinners. I desire to acquiesce in the glorious plan of saving sinners by him; to accept of reconciliation with God, through him; and to close with thee as my God, in



him. I resign myself unto thee, desiring to be separated from every thing hateful unto thee. I take all things around me to witness, that whatever I hitherto have been, I do accept of thy offer of peace, through Christ, and take hold of thy Covenant this day, never to be reversed. Having accepted of the offer, I will henceforth wait for thy salvation and live for thy glory. Pardon, O Lord, what may be amiss in my doing this, and accept of me in Christ Immanuel."

This mode of devoting ourselves unto God has been recommended by many eminently holy men, such as Allein, Henry, and Doddridge, and cannot but deepen our seriousness, and impart to us, by the blessing of God, a spirit of unwavering decision in walking with him. A personal covenant with God—drawn out with great deliberation, after serious self-examination and fervent supplications—read over and pondered while kneeling in the presence of God, and there signed under a deep sense of the solemnity of the transaction and the awful majesty and infinite purity of God, with whom we have to do—laid past in a secure place, and renewed from year to year at the table of the Lord, over the sacred emblems of Christ's broken body and shed blood—will, beyond all doubt, enable us, by the blessing of God, to overcome many strong temptations to sin—impart to us humble filial boldness in pouring out our wants before God, and, it may be, cast a ray of heavenly hope and peace over our minds in the awful hour of our departure from this world of sin and sorrow. A Christian who has thus surrendered himself to God, to be his only and for ever, must regard himself as not his own, but God's, not merely by creation and redemption, but by his own most solemn and oft repeated vows, and so be constrained to walk as seeing him who is invisible, and live perpetually to the glory of his God and Saviour. At the same time, there is great

danger that he may place too much dependence upon the moral influence such a covenant is fitted to have upon the mind, and be thus drawn away from trusting with undivided hope upon the gracious influences of God's spirit, to render him finally and completely victorious. Nothing, indeed, in the Christian life is so difficult as learning to live by faith upon Christ, as resting upon him alone for every spiritual blessing, and complying with that important direction of the great apostle of the Gentiles—"As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him."

On the 6th November, 1775, he joined the Natural Philosophy class, then taught by Dr. Anderson, the founder of the Glasgow Andersonian University. The doctor did not enter deeply into the mathematical department of Natural Philosophy, but his lectures were plain, popular, and interesting, while he himself was exceedingly beloved and respected by his students.

It was in the following summer that the subject of this memoir first went to Ayrshire, to be tutor in a family of the name of Logan, who, two years afterwards, recommended him to Sir William Cunningham of Auchenskeith, through whose influence he procured the presentation to the second charge of Kilmarnock. The way in which he became tutor in Mr. Logan's family, was most providential. At the conclusion of the Session, he resolved to go home during the summer months, and there devote himself to private study. He had his trunk placed upon the vehicle which was to convey him to the place of his destination, and was just standing in the Gallowgate, about to step up himself, when Mr Proudfoot, the master of the Grammar School, happening to pass that way, asked him what he intended doing during summer. When informed, he told him that Mr. Logan was desirous to obtain a tutor for his children during the summer months, and made



him the offer of the situation ; he accepted the offer, and, ordering down his trunk, proceeded in a day or two to Ayrshire. Had not the master of the Grammar School accidentally passed at that time, he would not have been offered the situation, nor, in all probability, would he have been tutor to Sir William Cunningham's family, or minister of Kilmarnock. Man proposes, but God disposes according to his own sovereign will. He guides his servants all through this world—he beholds and overrules the apparently most unimportant actions of their life—he arranges all things in such a manner as ultimately to promote their real well-being, and places them in the locality and circumstances where his unerring wisdom discerns they will most effectually promote his glory. The conviction of this truth ought to impart a humble and devout tranquillity, so far as this world is concerned, to the hearts of God's people, and lead them to acquiesce in all his dispensations, however dark and distressing, looking for the dawn of that eternal morning which will cast its radiance over the path they have trodden, and show them the dangers, the snares, and foes they escaped, by being led therein by the tender love of their heavenly father.

In November, 1776, he entered the Divinity Hall, and studied regularly, for two sessions, under the various professors of the theological classes, none of whom were distinguished in any remarkable manner by their talents or extensive erudition. In November, 1778, he went to Auchenskeith to reside with Sir William Cunningham, as tutor to his family, where he remained for seven years, until ordained minister of Kilmarnock. By Sir William and his lady he was, from first to last, treated with the utmost kindness. This he forgot not through his whole life, but, to his latest days, spoke with gratitude of the courteous and generous manner

in which he was treated while residing at Auchenskeith. During his residence there, he had an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the manners and maxims of the world, and was thus, from personal knowledge, enabled in after times to expose their folly more clearly and forcibly than otherwise he could have done. His own observation, and the manner in which he heard many in the higher ranks speaking of those clergymen who were given to hunting and other light amusements, and who courted the favour of the great to the neglect of their parochial duties, led him to the conclusion—a conclusion on which he acted through life—that a minister ought to give himself wholly to his own peculiar work; devote himself as much as possible to reading, meditation, and prayer; and mingle little in the society of irreligious men. If he act in this manner he may be derided, but he will never in heart be despised, even by men of the world, and will gradually command general, if not universal, esteem and reverence.

He was licensed, by the Presbytery of Ayr, to preach the gospel, on the 3d day of July, 1782, and preached his first discourse at Riccarton, on the 28th day of that month. His text was Eph. iii. 8—“Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is the grace given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.” Amongst the clergymen of the Presbytery of Ayr at that time, there prevailed considerable latitudinarianism in their religious opinions. Many of them addressed to their people dry moral harangues, such as any heathen philosopher might have composed; and not a few were decidedly heretical in doctrine—holding religious tenets directly opposed to the plainest declarations of Scripture, and the standards of our Church, to which they had given their solemn adherence when licensed and ordained. As a proof of this, it may be mentioned, that a venerable Doctor of Divinity ad-

dressed him, immediately after his being licensed, in the following manner :—“ Come and preach for me the sermon which you have now read, and I'll give you a good dinner ; but remember you must keep out the last sentence of your prayer—‘ unto the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost, *one* God, be glory for evermore ’—for you may just as well say that fifty make one, as that three are one. When a young man, I thought as you do, but I have changed my mind entirely.” Nor was he the only one suspected, and that justly, of holding, and, at least in private, advocating such erroneous and soul-destroying dogmas. At the same time, many of them were very indolent and inactive—never visited their parishes—and read the sermons of others to their flocks on the Sabbath-day. It was no uncommon thing for a family having a good library, to read out of a printed book in the evening, the sermon their minister had slowly and heavily given forth to them during the day. Their hearts did not appear to be in their work, and their grand object seemed to be to get through their duties as easily as possible, and to do as little as they decently could. Being tutor at Auchenskeith, he was in the habit of calling frequently upon them, and had thus an opportunity of forming a pretty fair estimate of their principles, and their character. One of them, a man well advanced in life, and enjoying a most comfortable benefice, apparently moved with compassion for the youthful student, and desirous of imparting unto him that wisdom he had learned only after long and painful experience, said to him one day—“ I am going to give you a most serious advice. Don't become a minister ; his is an endless and a heartless work ; he can never make any money by it. Go and become a merchant, save some money, then retire, and live at your ease. Were I young again, that would be what I would do.” It is no doubt true, that there were at this time sprinkled over the land, shining



in their own spheres apart, many truly pious ministers, like the stars faintly breaking the gloom of a misty night, but wherever moderatism prevailed, and it then prevailed to a fearful extent, the Church of Scotland seemed spiritually dead, and all living Christianity withdrew from its polluting touch.

In 1785, the subject of this memoir was presented to the second charge of Kilmarnock, by the Earl of Glencairn, in compliance with the earnest request of Sir William Cunningham. This presentation is dated 8th August, 1785; but a presentation, dated 15th November, 1785, was issued by the patron in favour of Mr. John Brown. What was the reason of this procedure—whether or not the patron wished his first presentee to take the presentation and be ordained on some conditions to which he could not submit—does not clearly appear; but certain it is, that after sending down the presentation fully drawn out, for some reason or other he granted another. Of this second presentation the people of Kilmarnock were not aware, till the night before the meeting of Presbytery at Irvine, when it was to be laid on their table, but imagined that the person first presented was to be their future pastor. When they heard of it that night they were filled with regret and indignation. Next morning, a great multitude of them assembled, marched out to the gate of the Manse, and sent down a deputation to Mr. Robertson, who, it was reported, had the presentation to Mr. Brown in his possession, requiring him to give up to them that document. Mr. Robertson, terrified by the sight of the crowd at his gate, and overcome by the fears and entreaties of his family, told them he had not the presentation, and informed them where they might get it, on its way down to Irvine. Accordingly, the people secured the presentation in favour of Brown ere it reached the hands of the Presbytery, and till this day,

from its worn and tattered condition, it is evident that it was then read and examined by many.\* After this, they sent a deputation to the Earl of Glencairn, and entreated him to appoint his first presentee to be their minister. When he saw their determined spirit, and learned how earnestly they wished to have the services of the preacher he had at the first appointed, he revoked the second presentation, and allowed him to be taken on trial and ordained, on the ground of the former one he had issued. Had not the people acted in this bold and decided manner, Mr. John Brown would have been their pastor, and the man of their choice never been their guide and instructor.

On the 6th April, 1786, the subject of this memoir was ordained to be a minister of the gospel. It may be mentioned, that the clergyman who presided on that occasion, was one who was intruded upon a people reclaiming almost to a man against his settlement. He continued near fifty years to be minister of the parish to which he was appointed, and though a kind, gentle, and inoffensive man, never secured their confidence; few went to hear him, and he spent his life among them almost in vain. My father saw him on his death-bed, when he was an aged and venerable man, on whose head were sprinkled those hoary hairs that throw around men, far advanced in life, an air of dignity and sacredness. How affecting, how touching, must it have been, thus to have seen him a day before his death, in the near prospect of entering into the presence of God, and rendering in to his master the account of his stewardship, and to have heard him say, as he then said, with feeble and faltering voice, while the tears started in his eyes, "My friends persuaded me that the people would soon give up their opposition, and that there was no hazard of my failing to do good amongst them ;

\* The Author has both these presentations in his possession.



but oh! had I known *then* what I know *now*, no consideration whatever would ever have led me to become minister of this parish." Such will be the sentiments, and the deep regret, sooner or later, of all who, for the sake of worldly gain, thrust themselves upon a Christian people, declaring, in the most solemn manner, that they cannot be benefited by their ministrations, and imploring them to depart to some other locality, where their services may be more acceptable and useful. When they are settled at first, they may rejoice in spirit, because they have baffled the resistance of the people, set at defiance their earnest remonstrance, and entered into the possession of a comfortable benefice, which may enable them to live at their ease, and bidding adieu to fortune and to hope, quietly to enjoy the pleasures of this present world; but when they come to the close of life, when the dark shades of the night of death begin to gather around them, and they must quit their hold of this world and go to give in their account, they will be filled with alarm, and deeply regret that, instead of seeking, above all things, the good of their fellow-men, they rather sought their own temporal ease and comfort.

So far as we are aware, only one parish minister of Kilmarnock, before this period, had been distinguished for piety and learning, and that was the Rev. Alexander Wedderburn, who died in 1678. A volume of his sermons was printed in 1721, with the following title:—“David’s Testament opened up, in forty sermons upon 2 Sam. 23 and 5, wherein the nature, properties, and effects of the covenant of grace are clearly held forth, by that eminent servant of Jesus Christ, Mr. Alexander Wedderburn, first minister of the gospel at Forgan, in Fife, and thereafter at Kilmarnock, in the West.” Of the subject of the present memoir, it may be said as of Wedderburn—“He had the tongue of the learned to

speaking a word in season to the weary; he knew when to lance and when to pour in oil; when to dispense a corrosive and when a cordial; he was a son of thunder and a son of consolation. As for the accompanying sermons, I hope they will recommend themselves to those who have their senses spiritually exercised. Such will not quarrel with the plainness and simplicity of the style."

In 1764, William Lindsay, minister of Cumbrae, was admitted, after very violent opposition from the people, to be minister of the second charge. This was one of these disgraceful intrusions which cast an indelible stigma upon the moderate party, and prove that the system of unrestricted patronage is one which ought never to be tolerated, and that, if patronage will not submit to be controlled and limited, it ought to be entirely abolished. This intruded clergyman died in 1774, and was succeeded by Mr. John Mutrie, who lived about ten years in the discharge of the duties of the ministry. It was to supply the vacancy created by his death, that the subject of this memoir was presented. Mr. Robertson was minister of the first charge at this time. He was by no means an active and laborious minister. Though he had only one sermon in the week to compose, he had discourses just sufficient to serve him for about three years, and these were exactly half an hour in length, and read over and over again *seriatim* to his congregation. It was supposed, some imagine justly, that he entertained the Arian doctrines regarding the person and work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. At all events, he brought forward very inadequate views of the truth, and not a few who sat under his ministration were led to embrace these erroneous and antisciptural opinions. In consequence of such men being the ministers, a very small number indeed attended the Low Church. Sometimes, it is said, there were none in the galleries of the church at all, and that, on one occasion, some boys having

got up there, employed themselves during sermon in directing the rays of the sun, by means of a piece of glass, upon the face and papers of the officiating clergyman, till they compelled him to call upon the church-officer to put them out and lock the doors of the gallery, there being no other persons there to be thus incarcerated. But though the Low Church was thus miserably attended, the High Church, (then a Chapel of Ease,) built by the inhabitants and town council in 1731, and supplied by the two ministers of the parish church, until the violent settlement of Mr. Lindsay, when the proprietors called a minister of their own, was filled with a devout and attentive audience. The minister of that church then was the Rev. John Russel, a man thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the gospel, deeply versed in theology, and zealous in his master's cause. Immediately after his settlement there, many conversions, especially amongst the young, took place, and several praying societies were instituted. He was, indeed, a great blessing to the town, and many of his people, we have no doubt, will be to him crowns of joy and rejoicing in the great day of the Lord. The subject of this memoir held with him much endearing intercourse, and ceased not to declare, until his dying day, that he was indebted to this able and excellent man for many of those sound views of divine truth he was accustomed to inculcate upon the people of his charge. The discourse which he published on the causes of Christ's agony in the garden of Gethsemane, shows him to have been a man of no ordinary attainments. Beside the High Church, there were in the parish, at that time, three dissenting places of worship, and the population of the town and parish amounted to five thousand people.

Such was the state of matters in the town of Kilmarnock at the time of Dr. Mackinlay's settlement there. Ere, however, one year had elapsed, the church was



crowded with a numerous and attentive audience, amongst whom, it is hoped, much permanent good was done. There was nothing, indeed, like a revival, in the usual acceptation of the term, but many were led silently and unobservedly to come out from the world, and devote themselves unto God. With them he became acquainted when called to visit them when dying, and he has often been heard to say, that the longer he lived, and the more persons connected with the congregation he saw when on their deathbed, the more rich and extensive did he perceive the blessings to be which God had conferred through his ministrations. The servants of God are apt to be discouraged when little fruit seems to result from their multiplied and earnest labours, and so to become faint and weary in well-doing, but they ought ever to remember that God is sovereign in appointing those who shall be highly honoured in converting sinners, and in choosing the particular localities upon which the influences of his spirit shall be copiously poured out; that they are now called upon to walk by faith, and not by sight, and that unutterable felicity will be theirs, if, in the heavenly world, when all sorrow and sin are at an end, they meet even with *one* sinner in glory, converted to the knowledge of the truth, and saved through their instrumentality. Greater blessedness than the joy that will then be theirs, it is not possible for created intelligences to reach, for it is a joy akin to that for which Christ endured the cross, and despised the shame.

In 1789, the subject of this memoir took a journey to London, along with Mr. Russel. His object in doing so, was to avoid the violent settlement of Mr. Duncan at Ardrossan. This Mr. Duncan had been presented to the church of Ardrossan, and though the people of that parish were keenly opposed to his settlement, and determined, if possible, not to have him as their minister, he was resolved to intrude himself upon them, and

make himself their spiritual guide and instructor. The minister of the second charge of the Low Church was well known to be strongly opposed to all such intrusions, yet the Presbytery had no regard for his conscientious opinions on this important subject, and were fully resolved to appoint him to ordain Mr. Duncan. As he was determined not to ordain a man so disagreeable to the people, regarding such a procedure as contrary to the standards of our Church, and the spirit of Christianity, he was involved in great difficulty, and was preparing himself for severe ecclesiastical censures, or expulsion from the Church. A venerable clergyman, however, gave him an advice, by compliance with which he avoided such a painful result. This aged and experienced minister said to him, while they were talking over the difficulties of the case, "My advice to you is—get out of the way; go for a while to England, or Ireland, or France, go where you will, but by all means get out of the way of the coming evil." The wisdom of this counsel he perceived at once, and accordingly having hired two ponies, he and Mr. Russel, who kindly agreed to accompany him, set out to ride up to London. They joined each other at Ayr, and rode on by New Cumnock, Kirkconnel, Dumfries, Carlisle, Penrith, till they arrived at Carleton-upon-Trent, about nine miles from Newark. There they left their two ponies, and went to London in a coach called the Princess Royal, arriving there July 10, 1789. Dr. Love, the minister of the Scots Presbyterian Church, Artillery Lane, and Mr. Steven, minister of Crown Court, were in waiting to receive them, and gave them a most cordial and hearty welcome. While in London, my father preached every Sabbath, in churches belonging to various denominations, and endeavoured to see as many of the wonders of that immense city as he possibly could. The Presbytery sent a letter to his own house, and another directed to him at



Mr. Steven's, in London, ordering him to preside at the ordination of Mr. Duncan, but owing to certain precautions he had taken, he never saw either of them, till he found them both awaiting him on his arrival from London. While in London, he met with John Newton, and Thomas Scott, the commentator, and had with them much pleasant and instructive conversation. He heard both of them preach, and was especially delighted with a sermon Mr. Scott delivered, upon Rom. viii. 1. The closing sentence of that discourse was one that struck him much, and was never forgotten by him. In the application, he earnestly entreated impenitent sinners to return unto God, pressed upon them the necessity of immediate attention to this duty, and, after a solemn pause, concluded by saying, "Sure I am, my friends, it is not now too soon for you to repent, and blessed be God, it is not yet too late." He breakfasted one morning, a little before he left London, with Mr. Newton, whose sight was then failing. He asked him in what part of Scotland he lived, and brought down a map for him to point out the place. Having put his finger at the place pointed out, where it was marked, this excellent man said, "Well, when I travel in spirit, I will not forget my good friends at Kilmarnock." Altogether, he appeared to be a man burning ardently with love to Christ, and sincerely rejoicing to meet with any who preached the truth as it is in Jesus. Mr. Russel and his companion remained in London until August 10, and enjoyed great pleasure and satisfaction in the society of Love, Steven, and Hunter, the great lights of the Presbyterian Church in the metropolis. On that day they set out to return to Carleton-on-the-Trent, and along with them in the coach was the celebrated Dr. Paley, with whom they entered into conversation. They found him not well-informed regarding the constitution of the Church of Scotland, and especially respecting the

power of the Commissioner in her assemblies. They endeavoured to show him the mistakes into which he had fallen, and gave him some information regarding the state and prospects of our Church. On parting, he said, "I must confess there are many good things connected with your Church, but I cannot bear your Presbyterian parity." At Carleton, they resumed their ponies, and arrived once more in Kilmarnock, Tuesday, September 1, 1789. We find, in the conclusion of the small record of the journey kept by the subject of this memoir, the following entry:—

"Tuesday, September 1. Arrived at Kilmarnock after an absence of two months and a day. Blessed be the Lord for his protecting kindness, and for rendering this journey not only useful in promoting my health, but in avoiding the violent settlement of Mr. Duncan, at Saltcoats, which took place in my absence. O let goodness and mercy follow me all my days; may I be made the instrument of saving many souls, and be myself saved in the Lord, after finishing my course, with an everlasting salvation." Mr. Duncan, during his absence, was ordained; not, however, in the parish church of Saltcoats. So strong was the opposition manifested against him, and such was the excitement prevailing amongst the people, that the Presbytery could not muster up courage to invade the parish, and ordain the intruder before the injured and insulted people, but quietly set him apart to the solemn office of the ministry in their usual place of meeting at Irvine. Having brought great odium upon themselves by such unbecoming conduct, and roused the indignation of many to the highest degree, they did not think it prudent to assail the man who had virtually refused to ordain the unacceptable presentee, but allowed him, without ever calling him to account, quietly to resume his labours at Kilmarnock.

Not long after his return from this journey to Lon-

don, he was seized upon by a dangerous malady, which brought him nigh to the gates of death. The attending physician told him candidly that he was in very great danger, and he himself was fully persuaded that he was just about to die. His mind, however, was calm and collected, full of humble hope and confidence in God. In referring, as he often did, to this solemn visitation, he said, "I remembered that the High Priest entered into the Holy of Holies once every year, and stood with safety and acceptance before the mercy-seat, because he had the blood of atonement in the one hand, and the incense in the other; and resolving, in like manner, to go into the presence of God, presenting only the blood of Christ shed for sinners, and making his sufferings and death the only ground of my hope, I enjoyed great peace, and felt almost assured of not being rejected. Oh, I wish I may just have the same peace, hope, and joy, when I am actually called upon to die, and stand before God in judgment." Such, very nearly, were his words, the week previous to his death, while speaking of the goodness of God in sparing him so long, and of the certainty that his earthly pilgrimage was very near its close.

In 1792, he was chosen to be the minister of the New Parish, Greenock, in a most flattering and pleasing manner, and earnestly requested to comply with the call. He received several invitations of a similar kind during his ministry, but he invariably refused to comply with them, assigning as his reasons for so doing, that he had been settled at Kilmarnock by the earnest desire of the people, to whom he was much attached, that it afforded a large field of usefulness, and that his labours had been blessed to not a few. He thought that he would not be so useful in any other place as in Kilmarnock, where he had already obtained some tokens of success, and that if thence removed, he would be like a forest tree arrived at its full maturity, which, when transplanted, never grows so



luxuriantly, nor flourishes so beautifully, as it did in the spot wherein it first gathered nourishment and strength. Nor did he ever regret his conduct in thus remaining in the parish to which he was at first appointed. He never regretted that he became a minister of Jesus Christ; on the contrary, after long experience, he was heard repeatedly to declare, that he did not think any man could be so happy, even in this world, as a sincere and devoted minister; and he never regretted remaining through life in the same place; in no part of Scotland did he think he could have done more good, or enjoyed more happiness. It was indeed truly delightful to hear him, in his old age, when wearied *in* the work, but not *of* the work, blessing and praising God because he had put it into his heart to become a minister of the word, and had so ordered the bounds of his habitation, that he laboured all his days in Kilmarnock.

In 1799, his colleague, Mr. Robertson, died after a long and painful illness, having been thirty-four years a minister. The Rev. David Ritchie was presented to the first charge in his room, but he remained only a short time, being translated to St. Andrew's Church, Edinburgh, in 1801. The Rev. Mr. Grant was appointed to succeed him, and remained about eight years.

On Sabbath, the 18th October, 1801, an appalling accident befel the people assembled in the Low Church of Kilmarnock. On the afternoon of that day the church was crowded to excess before the arrival of the minister. About the time when the bell had ceased ringing, the end of a seat at the east door cracked; two persons in it immediately exclaimed that the house was falling; the alarm communicated like lightning, and every one believed what he heard, and what imagination readily represented. On this, a rush was made by the assembled multitudes to get out, lest they should be buried in the ruins; and as the stairs from the galleries led down



into the area of the church, the crush was tremendous. Many were thrown down, covered by others cast down in the same way, and trampled upon by multitudes pressing violently to get out. As my father, with the preacher who was to officiate for him that day, was coming up to the church, he saw the people pouring out in crowds, and running forward, inquired the cause at a man who was fleeing at full speed from the scene of danger. This individual replied that the church was falling; and so fully persuaded was he that this was the case, that, as he resumed his flight, he cried "Look! see the steeple itself is beginning to tumble to the ground." Though the steeple was standing as firm as a rock, and stands to this day, his excited imagination led him to think it was bending and about to fall. The spectacle presented in and around the church, on that day, was truly heart-rending—thirty individuals being crushed to death. The alarm was a false alarm, for although, when the church was afterwards examined, it was found the roof was insecure, had the people quietly and calmly retired, no lives would have been lost, nor injury sustained. This calamity created a great sensation throughout the country, and several letters of condolence and sympathy, from various Christian friends at a distance, were received by him whose life we are now recording. We present the reader with the two following; the first from Dr. Balfour, and the other from Dr. Love:—

" GLASGOW, 23d October, 1801.

" MY DEAR SIR,—I was in Paisley when I first heard of the very awful calamity in your church. I was overwhelmed with concern for the people in general, and especially for you and other worthy friends of my particular acquaintance. Every person in Paisley seemed to feel in the same manner. The intelligence was too strongly confirmed by different letters to be doubted, yet we were extremely unwilling to believe the whole

till more fully investigated. I persuaded myself that you would take the trouble of writing me some account of it, and was both grieved and mortified when I returned to Glasgow on Tuesday and found no letter from Kilmarnock. Toward the evening, I was somewhat relieved by the arrival of your letter; my heart bled with yours, and with the many whose terror, affliction, and death, made the Sabbath and sanctuary, consecrated to solemn joy, a time and place of alarm, and tears, and blood. What a day, my dear Sir, will next Sabbath be to you and your people, if you are fit for duty; what a difficult and melting service will it be. I pray and hope that your divine and gracious master will stand by you and strengthen you. O that he may make it a day of his power. Surely on such an occasion they will hear with uncommon seriousness; they will be thoughtful, and their hearts tender; they will remember their danger, and wonder at their escape; they must be peculiarly affected with the suddenness of death, and the various manner of painful bereavement. Can there be a mind untouched with sympathy? Can they be unconcerned about eternity, when they think that, instead of hearing a sermon, the word of life, they might, with others, have given in their final account of all sermons they ever heard, or might have heard? How affecting to see a whole congregation in sackcloth; to hear them sing of mercy and of judgment; and to listen to the address of condolence, of warning, of instruction, and of promise. You will obtain mercy to be faithful and affectionate, and I trust power from on high will accompany the word spoken. What a wonderful change of scene would be exhibited, were you to see recollected and improved desolation the sanctified occasion of spiritual and eternal life to dead souls. Can they live? Breathe, O Breath, upon the slain, that they may live! Do you, my dear Sir, speak the word of the Lord, and Israel shall be gathered; or he shall be glorified, and you shall be accepted. The Lord seems to have an alarming controversy with Kilmarnock, but he has many faithful people there, he will hear their cry, comfort their hearts, and in the midst of wrath, remember mercy; in the midst of evil days, revive his work, and perhaps make you the honoured instrument. Let not your hands, my dear Sir, hang down, or your knees be feeble, or your heart faint; as your day is, so shall your strength. Assure yourself, and all my friends, of my poor prayers: indeed, I believe, all the praying people here are deeply interested about

you. Mrs. Balfour and family join in tenderest sympathy toward you, with your truly affectionate friend and brother,

“ R. BALFOUR.”

“ ANDERSTON, *October 23, 1801.*

“ MY DEAR SIR,—I cannot refrain from expressing, in a few words, my concern and sympathy with you under your late solemn visitation, which at this distance hath impressed us with the terrors of the Lord. What must it have been to be in the midst of the awful scene. To rehearse trite and common-place remarks, on such an occasion, would be manifest want of feeling, and to insult the majesty of God displayed in so alarming an approach of his almighty hand. Nor can the best human sympathy be of much avail, under sorrows of this magnitude, any farther than it may be instrumental to introduce the presence of that great comforter, whose healing power no form of distress, no hour of darkness, can baffle or resist. I hope your eyes are toward him for personal support and counsel in this time of need. You know the order and manner of his operation to wound, to cast down, and to kill, that he may bring nearer the healing balm of the covenant, and impart the powerful cordial of heavenly love. But leaving your particular support in the hands of him who hath the tongue of the learned, I am especially anxious, and entertain a degree of jealousy respecting the right improvement among your people, and through the whole country, of so costly and bitter a mean of awakening and instruction. I tremble at the consequence of trifling or remaining stupid and rebellious; or of a slight, carnal, transient concern, in reference to so solemn a flash of divine wrath in the sanctuary. In that case, the things which have happened, dreadful though they are, must be regarded only as a little hand-writing upon the wall, the presage of a heavier train of desolating calamities. Indeed, the wrathful countenance of Deity, in this dispensation, appears to me to have something so decisive in it, that something very momentous must ultimately follow it. O, that it may be a signal, however painful in its nature, of the approach of days of true spiritual reviving, and a stirring of life among the dry bones in this hypocritical and stubborn country, which has held fast deceit in the face of so much mercy and judgment. How wonderful would be the change if, instead of vain oblations and a calling of assemblies, which the



holy God cannot away with, and the multiplying of vain and unfulfilled professions, there should yet appear among us the true solemnity, beauty, and fruitfulness, of awakened living heavenly assemblies, breathing the odours of the presence of the triumphant Saviour. It is, I doubt not, one important end of your painful calamity, to warn faithful pastors throughout the land to pursue the great ends of their ministry with more pressing earnestness, and fear, and solicitude; and to warn those congregations, especially where the voice of truth is heard, to take heed what they are doing, lest the God of unknown purity, jealousy, and power, break forth upon them, and a worse thing than what they have heard of at Kilmarnock, befall them. O, that the Lord Jesus Christ himself may be, in an especial manner, with your spirit on this trying occasion. May he bring you into the secret of his presence, and into the midst of his marvellous light, that this shadow of death may be turned into the morning, and this valley of Achor may become to you and your afflicted people, a door of hope. I remain, my dear Sir, with affectionate sympathy, yours,

“ JOHN LOVE.”

On the Sabbath immediately succeeding that on which this mournful catastrophe took place, the congregation met, in the middle of the day, in the High Church, when my father addressed to them a discourse upon Luke xiii. 1—5—“ There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus, answering, said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish,” &c. The concluding observations were those that follow:—“ The awful scene, so full of distress and grief, in this place, last Sabbath, must be vividly present to the minds of you all. I have no doubt that it has made a deep impression upon your hearts, and will be long remembered by the inhabitants of this town, after we have departed, and have been laid in the grave, with

those whom God summoned away so suddenly. Let those who have escaped from danger, or from death, be thankful. You might have been amongst them who were in a moment, without warning, called from the sanctuary to the throne of judgment, and the eternal world. Had this been the case, where would you now have been? Would you have been with Lazarus in heaven, enjoying the felicity of the righteous, or with the rich man in hell, enduring that terrible misery, which shall ever increase, and know no end? Brethren, this is a solemn question, which you would do well seriously to ponder. This calamity has been brought upon us on account of sin—not the sin of one individual, or of a few, but the sins, the ignorance, the unthankfulness, the injustice, and immorality of many; and therefore it speaks to me, to you, to all in this neighbourhood, and loudly calls upon us to search our ways, mourn over our sins, and earnestly entreat God that he would not consume us in his hot displeasure. If we persevere in holding fast our iniquity, severe and mournful as this calamity has been, it will be succeeded in a little by one still more destructive. God sent upon the Jews, because of their iniquity, first, a want of bread throughout their land; then, on account of their continued impenitence, the pestilence and the sword; and because, even then, they returned not to him, he overthrew some of them, as he overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, yet they remained hardened in sin; and hence the Prophet, denouncing against them still more severe judgments, exclaims, ‘Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.’ Amos iv. 6—13. Similar will be God’s dealings with us, if this calamity lead us not to return unto him with sincere and godly sorrow. Let them who have been deprived of near relatives by this mournful accident, submit to the will of God, and repair to his word for comfort and support. If you are real Christians, however distress-

ing the visitation may be, and however much you may feel it, the Scripture points out abundant sources of consolation. Are any Christian parents lamenting the loss of children, to whom their hearts were bound, and whose virtuous conduct gave them great delight?—let them remember that the Lord will give them a name amongst his people, better than that of sons and of daughters; and that, although he may remove their children, he will not take away from them that covenant of his love, ordered well in all things, and sure. Are Christian children mourning over the loss of fathers who were wont to guide and instruct them?—God has revealed himself in the amiable and endearing character of the father of the fatherless. Are Christian widows lamenting the loss of their beloved companions, with whom they took sweet counsel, and to whom they looked, under God, for the comforts and enjoyments of life?—the Lord is the husband of the widow, and it is their duty to trust in him, and cast all their cares upon him who careth for them. Are any left orphans, deprived of a father's protection, and a mother's tender care?—God is the stay of the orphan, and though father and mother have left them, God will take them up. To such this visitation must be very painful and distressing, yet let them not sorrow, as them who have no hope, but show the reality of their faith, by meek and patient resignation. 'The Lord is in his holy temple, and let all the earth keep silence before him. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord.'

It is to be hoped that, in consequence of this mournful visitation, many were awakened and constrained, like the Philippian jailer, to inquire after the way of salvation. Were not, indeed, human nature entirely depraved, not one, but all who witnessed the scene of wo, would have repented, and sought God with earnest



perseverance; but it requires more than the sight of miracles, or the near approach of death, to change the hard and deceitful heart of man. “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.”

In 1808, the Rev. Mr. Grant was translated to one of the churches of Edinburgh, and on the 1st of December, the same year, a presentation was issued by his Grace the Duke of Portland, appointing my father to succeed him in the first charge. This presentation was granted by his Grace in compliance with a petition presented to him by the people of Kilmarnock; and few would be found regarding patronage as an intolerable grievance, were patrons always to act in this becoming and considerate manner. The Rev. Dr. John M'Leod, author of a Gaelic dictionary, and afterwards translated to Dundonald, was appointed to the second charge. In 1810, at the earnest request of many of his friends in Kilmarnock, as well as on account of his reputation as a theologian of no mean attainments, the subject of this memoir was honoured with the degree of Doctor of Divinity, by the Marischal College of Aberdeen.

After this period, he appears to have gone on quietly and perseveringly in the discharge of the varied duties of his important and responsible office, striving to impress the great truths of the gospel upon the minds and hearts of his flock, and to grow in knowledge, grace, and preparedness for heaven. No event worthy of any particular observation took place in his life for some time. It may be stated, however, in this place, that he was accustomed to review his conduct, and examine his progress in the divine life, at the close of every year. On the evening of the last day of every year, he sat up till at least twelve o'clock, examining himself regarding the manner in which he had served God during the year about to close, forming resolutions of future amend-

ment, and imploring mercy to pardon his sins, and grace to enable him to walk more closely than ever with God. This practice he observed from his earliest days; but we find the first written memorial of the result of this examination in 1812. It is as follows:—"31st December, 1812. I have been mercifully preserved to see the close of another year. This circumstance awakens in my mind the recollection of past events, and excites fervent gratitude to the Father of mercies, in not cutting me down in my sins, but in preserving me amid many dangers, and in still causing his face to shine upon me. I have not duly considered and improved the dispensations of providence and the means of grace during the year which is about to close, and therefore I wish to enter upon this new one with humility, with self-abasement, forming purposes of being more watchful, more diligent, and more entirely devoted to the work of the Lord. Perhaps the hand that now writes, before the close of this new year, may be cold and mouldering in its kindred dust. God may be saying to me now, 'This year thou shalt die.' I desire, therefore, to take anew a hold of God in Christ as my portion, to cultivate a more close communion with that friend that sticketh closer than any brother, and who hath graciously said, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.'"

All who wish to be followers of Christ ought to give serious and regular attention to the duties of self-examination and meditation upon religious truth. At the close of every day, before engaging in our evening devotions, we ought to call ourselves to account, and inquire how we commenced the day—how we have discharged the duties incumbent upon us—resisted temptation—and redeemed the time granted us by God. Such inquiries ought to be more strict and searching on the evening of the Sabbath, and at the close of the year. To this serious scrutiny of our ways and heart, we must join

meditation for some considerable portion of time every day, upon the glorious truths revealed in the Word of God. We ought not merely to read some verses of the Bible, or pages of a pious book, but ponder well what we read, and apply it pointedly and solemnly to our hearts and consciences. Without daily attention to such exercises, as well as prayer to God, we will make no progress in holiness, be easily overcome by every slight temptation, and never find wisdom's ways to be ways of pleasantness and paths of peace. Let us never forget that it is chiefly while in secret and solitude, holding communion with God, contemplating his glory, searching our hearts, and entreating his favour, that we are to obtain that spirituality of mind, and that elevation of soul, which will fit us for taking a part, with unspeakable delight, in the pure and holy exercises of the heavenly sanctuary.

In 1815, he married Elizabeth Dickie, eldest daughter of Mr. James Dickie, a native of Kilmarnock. She was a very pious and benevolent person, and much given to earnest prayer. In forming this connexion, he mainly considered the fervent piety and Christian character of her whom he took as the companion of his life, and hence they lived together in the fear and love of God, enjoying the greatest harmony and happiness, until God, in his providence, separated them by death.

In 1825, being the fortieth year of his ministry, the congregation presented him with a handsome service of plate, as a testimony of their gratitude for the ability and faithfulness with which he had discharged the duties of his arduous office. Such a testimony must be very grateful to a Christian pastor; yet nothing can impart such delight to the faithful and zealous minister of the Cross, as the success of his efforts in winning souls to Christ. Such a man is desirous, even at the peril of his life, to declare the gospel to his hearers, and longs, with



great earnestness, to behold them going with deep humility and offering their undivided hearts to his glorious Master, in token of their love and gratitude. It is for this he longs, and labours, and prays; it is this he regards as his joy and reward. When, then, sinners are converted, and saints edified,—when the spirit is poured out from on high, and a holy harmony and concord prevail among his flock—he is full of gladness—his labours and sorrows are forgotten, as waters that have passed away—and he experiences a satisfaction and peace which none can ever know who have not the spirit and love of Christ.

At the conclusion of this year, in reviewing his life, he wrote the following memorandum:—“Kilmarnock, 31st December, 1825. Another year is about to close, and, in reviewing it, I see much cause for deep humility and sorrow upon account of my sins and shortcomings, and much ground also for thanksgiving that I and my family have enjoyed so many mercies. The Lord, during this year, hath given and taken away—he gave us a little one in April, and in about three weeks took it away. But, blessed be his name for the many mercies and comforts, personal and domestic, that still remain. I am apt to be too much attached to this world; I have not read and meditated upon the Scriptures so carefully and constantly as I ought to have done; and in prayer I have been often cold and formal. Lord, enable me to be more heavenly-minded; to be less concerned about worldly things; to search the Scriptures with more constancy and attention; and, in secret prayer, to be more earnest and importunate for myself and my people—to ask—to seek—to knock.”

On the 10th February, 1826, after recovering from a severe illness, he drew out another covenant, wherein he solemnly devoted himself again unto God. As it is interesting to compare the first covenant which he made,

when a young man, with the one he drew out at this time, we present it to the reader entire :—“ Kilmarnock, 10th February, 1826. O Lord, I have now nearly finished the fortieth year of my ministry in this place—an astonishing instance of sovereign mercy and long-suffering patience; for, alas! I am afraid I have been a cumberer of the ground, and might have been cut down in my sins. I have often resolved to be more circumspect, vigilant, and active, and yet have not acted according to my resolutions. I have often confessed my sins, and yet have not forsaken them and amended my way. Thou hast frequently reprov'd and corrected me, and yet I have not received correction, but gone on frowardly in my own way, and in the way of mine own heart. But, O Lord, to whom shall a sinner flee but unto thee, the Saviour of sinners. Nothing can save me but the sovereign and almighty exercise of thy grace. To thee, O blessed Redeemer, I flee for relief. I trust to thy perfect atonement for pardon and acceptance, and I give myself up to thee—ignorant, guilty, enslaved, and polluted, as I am—that thou mayest be my wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. O bestow upon me righteousness, knowledge, purity, and salvation, yea, all the blessings of which I stand in need. I hereby again take thee to be my God and portion in time and in eternity. Blessed Saviour, come and visit me with thy salvation ere I die. I give up myself, and my family, and my flock, to thee, encouraged by thy most gracious promise (Gen. xvii. 7), ‘I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and thy seed after thee.’ I desire to take hold of thy covenant, well ordered in all things and sure, and in the strength of thy grace to devote myself unto thee, to be thine wholly, only, and for ever. Accept, O Lord, of this dedication of myself unto thee,

and enable me to walk in thy ways, and to live to thy glory, by doing those things that are pleasing in thy sight."

On the 3d July, 1828, Mrs. Mackinlay died in peace, and in the hope of eternal life. She was soon followed by the two children to whom she had given birth shortly before, and all the three were interred in the same grave. This was indeed a severe trial, but by the grace of God he was enabled to submit with meek resignation, as the following memorandum will show :—

"3d July, 1828. God has been pleased to remove my beloved partner from me in righteousness. It is my duty to submit to his will, and in future to guard against sin, which is the procuring cause of sorrow, suffering, and bereavement. I am too apt to think, O how happy should I have been had she been continued with me, had I been cheered with her smiles—favoured with her love and affectionate attention. The joys of former days pass before me, and acquire a new value in mine eyes from the thought that they are gone, never to return. The past seems a scene of unmingled happiness. Hence arises the wish that the bereavement had not happened; but this wish is not consistent with unreserved submission to the will of God, for, could I bring her back, it would be my duty not to do it, since it has pleased God to remove her, I hope to a better world. Let me only learn, therefore, wisely to improve this painful trial, hoping that by being suitably exercised under it, the peaceable fruits of righteousness may be produced, and I may see that even in this bereavement the Lord has done well. Oh since he has taken away the desire of mine eyes with a stroke, may Christ be more than ever the desire of my heart."

Afflictions are sent by God upon his people with the view of instructing them, and raising their affections more and more above this present world. They come



to show them the bitterness and evil of sin—the vanity of all terrestrial objects—how little the world can do for them—and how much Christ can do. When in affliction, the Christian learns many a precious lesson, to which, if not visited with trials, he would through life have remained a stranger. “We fear,” says Bishop Hall, “our best friends: for my part, I have learned more of God and myself in one week’s extremity, than the prosperity of a whole life had taught me before.” Certainly the people of God, however severe and protracted their sufferings, or painful their trials be, have no reason to complain—if, while in affliction their faith be strengthened, and their love and humility deepened—if the glorious grandeur of the future world be brought very nigh to their souls—if Christ, instead of being, as formerly, to them as a fixed star, bright, indeed, but distant and obscure, shine in upon them as the sun in his meridian splendour—for then they will be able to say, “It is good for me that I am afflicted—

“Thou dost but take the lamp away,  
To bless me with unclouded day.”

In 1832, he was attacked by a severe illness, from which, however, he recovered, though his life was almost despaired of. The following prayer, written by him while labouring under this alarming indisposition, shows what were then his views and exercises:—

“O Lord, thou art my God and refuge. I hope through grace I have been enabled to believe in thee, and I desire to live and serve thee with all my heart. I desire to experience brokenness of spirit, and to prostrate myself at the foot of the throne of grace. I acknowledge my sins. I have sinned often and grievously against thee, and done wickedness, so that wert thou strict to mark iniquity, I could not stand, but be forever condemned. I hope I have closed with thy offers of mercy, and received the atonement of Christ as my

only refuge; but this day I desire to make a fresh application to the fountain opened by Christ—to look up anew to the Saviour upon the Cross, and to confide in him and his finished work. If I perish, it shall be at the foot of the Cross, looking to Jesus for a free, full, and eternal salvation. May thy purpose in sending this affliction upon me be fully answered. May it lead me to a renewal of my repentance, and render my faith more vigorous, and my obedience more cheerful and universal. May it lead me to serious self-examination—that if I am proud, I may be humbled—if selfish and covetous, I may become benevolent and beneficent—if carnal, spiritually minded—and if languid in devotion, may I become more ardent and importunate in this exercise. May it lead me to hate sin with a perfect hatred, and to have my hopes more than ever directed toward that land where there is no sin, and therefore no pain. I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that this corruption shall put on incorruption, and that this mortal shall put on immortality, and that death at last, as to the people of God, shall be swallowed up in victory. Lord, increase my faith, establish my hope, advance my personal holiness and meetness for heaven; make me more earnest and faithful than ever in exhorting and directing the people thou hast entrusted to my charge; and when I come to the end of my course, and shall be called to leave them and my beloved children behind me, I desire to comply with thy direction, Jer. xlix. 11, ‘Leave thy fatherless children, and I will preserve them.’ And oh, when father and mother leave them, may the Lord take them up, and be their God and father and friend in Christ Jesus. Is. lxiii. 9—‘In all their afflictions he is afflicted—in his love and pity he redeemed them.’ Is. xlvi. 4—‘Even unto old age I am he; I have made, and I will carry thee in weakness, and I will bear thee up under burdens.’”

On the 6th of April, 1836, he completed the fiftieth year of his ministry in Kilmarnock. A number of gentlemen invited him to a public dinner on that day, to congratulate him upon the occasion; and the week following, a congregational banquet, attended by upwards of five hundred persons, was held in honour of the same event. On both these occasions, the feelings of respect and attachment, manifested towards him, were highly cheering and gratifying, and his addresses to his assembled friends and people were very touching and serious. The following are the concluding sentences of the one he delivered at the congregational banquet:—

“It is said of the Apostle John, when he was old and unable to address an assembly at any length, that he was carried into the church, and said with much feeling, ‘Christians, love one another.’ This exhortation we would now address toward you. See that you live in the bonds of Christian affection, and that ye be of the same mind, and of the same judgment. Guard against divisions and dissensions, jealousies, animosities, and strifes; and endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace. Prize and improve time and privileges, mind the one thing needful, and lay hold upon eternal life. From my increasing infirmities and advanced life, I cannot expect to live much longer among you; but as I have devoted my youth and the vigour of my days to your service, so, while any measure of health and strength remains, I shall continue to officiate and attend to such ministerial duties as I shall be able to perform. And while I request an interest in your sympathy, your charity, and prayers, I shall always remember you in my supplications at a throne of grace, praying that I may stand perfect and complete in the whole will of God, and that you may be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. Now, brethren, I com-



mend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified.”

On this occasion, a congregational library was formed, and called the “Mackinlay Library,” which will, no doubt, remain a lasting memorial of his usefulness, and the gratitude of his people. An address was also presented to him, signed by the dissenting clergy of all denominations, and their office-bearers, expressing their gratification at his being spared so long and so faithfully to labour in the vineyard of the Lord. As this address breathes a spirit of Christian charity and love, we deem it worthy of being preserved. It is as follows:—

“We, whose names are undersigned, being persons connected with various congregations of Christians in town, beg leave to present to you our heartfelt congratulations on your having completed the fiftieth year of your ministry, and to express our high sense of the evangelical zeal, the eminent acceptance, and, we doubt not, the extensive usefulness of your labours during such an unusual period of pastoral duty.

“While we conscientiously hold opinions different from yours on some points of ecclesiastical order, we rejoice on this occasion to remember only the great and supremely important articles on which we all agree. We desire to be thankful that you have been spared so long to preach and to recommend to your fellow-creatures the unsearchable riches of Christ; and we entertain the pleasing belief, that, of the vast multitudes to whom you have proclaimed the glad tidings of salvation, many will be to you a crown of rejoicing, and contribute to fill up the measure of your gratitude and happiness through eternity. It is our heart’s desire and prayer that you may long be spared and enabled to declare, with your wonted unction and energy, the glorious gospel of the blessed God; and when your divine Master

shall call you hence, may he, the righteous judge, give you the crown of righteousness which is laid up for all who love his appearing. Permit us to assure you of the sincerity and the cordiality with which we join your own congregation in our thanksgivings and prayers in your behalf."

Few are spared so long to preach the gospel, and fewer still are blessed, at such an advanced period of life, with that vigour of mind, and strength of body, which the subject of this memoir then, and until his death, enjoyed. His long life and health he was wont to attribute, by the blessing of God, to three things—regular exercise, regular diet, and a cheerful, happy, contented mind. Though so long accustomed to preach, he never ascended the pulpit without much fear and anxiety. Experience had only deepened his sense of the responsibility of his office, and increased the awe and trembling he felt in the prospect of addressing the people entrusted to his care. Like Luther, he often said, "Though I am an old man, and have preached so long, I never think of preaching without trembling."

During this year, St. Marnock's, a new church in the Low Church parish, capable of holding upwards of seventeen hundred people, was opened for public worship. The two ministers of the parish were engaged to supply it; and as the subject of this memoir, from his advanced years, could not undertake to preach on both parts of the day every Sabbath, he procured the services of an assistant, to aid in the discharge of the additional duty to which he was called. His first assistant was the Rev. James Stevenson, a native of Kilmarnock, now minister of Newton-on-Ayr, who was afterwards married to his eldest daughter. He still, however, continued to preach, not unfrequently, half a day, and sometimes even a whole day, with unabated vigour and liveliness. When in the pulpit, he seemed to cast away completely

the weight of years, and threw so much life and spirit into his discourses, that no one, from hearing him preach, would have imagined that for half a century he had been employed in declaring to sinners the message of salvation. He appeared, also, after this period, to make great advancement in the divine life. Being convinced that he had but a very few years to live in the world, his grand object, even more than formerly, seemed to be, to fix his affections upon heavenly realities, and walk humbly and closely with his God. The following is the latest written memorial regarding his spiritual state and prospects which has been found :—“December 31, 1839. I have, since the 22d, entered upon the 83d year of my life in this world. I endeavoured, this evening, to humble myself before God, to praise him for his sparing mercy, and to renew my acceptance of Christ, and dependence upon him for salvation. I prayed that all my past sins might be forgiven, and that I might receive new supplies of grace, to abstain from all sin, and perform all the duties to which I am called in a manner profitable to men and pleasing unto God. Another year is fled and gone for ever, and I am another year nearer the grave ; oh, I hope I can say, nearer heaven. After a few years are come, I shall go the way whence I shall not return. If I live another year, may I live to the Lord ; if I die, may I die to the Lord ; living or dying may I be the Lord's. I believe and trust in his promise, ‘ I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee ;’ and hope that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, shall separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus my Lord.”

His growth in grace and increasing preparedness for heaven were more especially evident during the half year immediately preceding his death. Though more lively and cheerful even than his wont, he seemed to



have no delight in speaking regarding any subject but the glorious truths of the gospel. In family worship, his prayers were peculiarly earnest and impressive, while not unfrequently they were so long, as well as fervent, that it was manifest he felt the greatest pleasure and satisfaction in this holy and heavenly exercise. His growing spirituality of mind, combined with an unusual degree of vivacity, were frequently remarked, during the period mentioned, by those around him, though without any apprehension that his end was so near. This mournful event took place in a sudden and unexpected manner. He had resolved to preach on Sabbath, the 7th day of February, 1841, and though rather complaining on the Friday and Saturday, and entreated repeatedly to refrain from doing so, he said he would keep by his determination. Accordingly, on that day he preached an excellent and touching discourse from Ps. xciv. 19—"In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul." He delivered this discourse with great animation, though now and then he seemed to feel considerable difficulty in quoting the texts of Scripture illustrative of his subject, which he was accustomed to do with the greatest accuracy and facility. His object in explaining his text was to show that the consolatory truths of the gospel are sufficient to cheer and support the Christian in the day of trial and distress, and more especially at the hour of death. The following are the observations he made on the power of the gospel to uphold believers, when called to depart from this world :—

"It is astonishing that though we know that ere long we must die, we think so little of that solemn and momentous event. The only remedy, indeed, which some men have against the fear of death is a total forgetfulness of it; and if, by forgetfulness, they could keep it at a distance, their conduct would not be so much to

be condemned. It can, however, afford them only a temporary relief, for the time shall soon come when they must think of death, and meet with him, whether they will or not. Such is not the course pursued by believers, for they consider well their latter end. The departure of others, and the experience of personal suffering, remind them from time to time, that the earthly house of their tabernacle must soon be taken down, and that the day is fast coming when they must appear before God in judgment. The contemplation of these important and awful truths has filled the hearts of some believers with a fear of death, through which all their lifetime they have been subject to bondage. Their fears may be expressed in some such language as the following:— ‘When we reflect upon the pain and wasting disease that precede death, the separation of the soul from the body, the return of the body to its original dust, the parting with all we hold dear in this world, and especially the appearing before a pure and holy God to be judged, our minds are appalled with the awful prospect; and if the prospect be so dreadful, how tremendous must be the reality!’ Yet the sublime doctrines of the gospel, revealing, as they do, the gracious character of God, the love of Christ, the blessed resurrection, and glorious immortality of his people, are sufficient to support the Christian in the immediate prospect of death. Christ, by his atoning sacrifice, has deprived death of all power to do his people any real or permanent injury. He encountered him as an enemy, and not only vanquished, but triumphed over him in his own dominions. Death left and lost his sting in him, for he bore our sins in his own body upon the tree. When the sting is taken from a venomous reptile, though its appearance may be repulsive and unsightly, it is quite innocuous; and so, when our sin, which is the sting of death, is taken away by the applied atonement of our great High Priest, it

has no power to injure us. God, being reconciled to us, will guide us unto death, guard us over death, and be our portion for ever. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ, which shall follow us through life and through death, and, as a mighty river, flow on with us through everlasting ages in the heavenly world. In dying, our Lord shall be with us, his rod and his staff shall sustain us, and therefore we need fear no evil. As the presence of the sun dispels the darkness of night, and diffuses light over the face of nature, so the presence of Christ, the Sun of righteousness, shall dispel the darkness of the valley of the shadow of death, and convert it into the path of light and the gate of glory. Death, indeed, comes as a friend to the Christian. He comes to free him from pain, sin, and sorrow; he comes as a messenger to call him from the field of conflict, that he may receive the crown of glory; he comes to lay his body in the grave, as in a bed of calm repose, to await the resurrection morn, when it shall be fitted for joining the soul in the pure and delightful exercises of the celestial sanctuary. Then shall the Christian appear before the judge of all—be openly acknowledged and acquitted by him—and ascend with his Redeemer into heaven, where his unutterable felicity will be of eternal duration. From this review of a believer's portion you will readily perceive that he has no reason to look forward to the hour of his departure with alarm, and accordingly we find, from sacred Scripture, that some who, through life, were afraid of death, have been enabled, when called to die, to meet him with calmness, while others have done so with triumph and holy joy. Jacob, when about to meet his brother, was afraid of death, but when he came to die, spoke of his departure with serenity—'Behold I die, but God shall be with you, and bring you again to the land of your fathers.' David once prayed to be spared, and said, Ps. cxix. 120, 'My



heart trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid at thy righteous judgments;’ yet, when called to die, his words were, ‘Although mine house be not so with God, yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, this is all my salvation and all my desire.’ Simeon could, because he had seen Christ, look forward to death with a holy elevation of soul— ‘Now, O Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.’ The Apostle Paul desired to depart and be with Christ, as a thing far better than to remain in this sinful and sorrowful world, and could, with well founded triumph exclaim, ‘O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.’ ”

On the Monday succeeding, he went out to attend a funeral, and on Tuesday he visited an aged Christian lady, whose patience, under severe trial, and calm confidence in God, he had often spoken of with admiration. She was at that time very ill, and in going out he said, “I am just going away to see Miss Campbell for the last time; she is so very ill, that I do not think I shall ever see her on earth again.” Little did he think that this Christian lady was to survive him for some weeks, and ere another day closed, he would himself be in the eternal world. After visiting her, he returned home, and at dinner appeared quite enlivened and cheered to see his whole family collected round him, for Mr. and Mrs. Stevenson had arrived at the manse, on their road from Glasgow to Ayr, intending to spend the night in Kilmarnock. Having retired to his own room, he was, about half-past five, seized with excruciating pain in the region of the stomach, and was found by those who answered his call for help, kneeling upon the floor in great agony and distress. Having gone to bed, the physician was sent for immediately, and the pain, after various

means had been used, was greatly alleviated, if not wholly removed, about ten o'clock, and no danger was apprehended. During the night, one of the family sat up with him, lest he should become suddenly worse. All night he lay very calmly—slumbering apparently now and then, and often audibly imploring God to give him grace to look to Christ, and to bear the affliction sent with resignation. Early in the morning, the change upon his appearance was very alarming, and it was therefore thought advisable that the physician should be again sent for to see him. One of the family at this time entering his room, was much struck with the change in his appearance, and asked how he felt himself. He replied immediately, "O I am greatly better now." She then asked him if he had been comfortable in his mind during the night. "Yes," he replied, "the desire of my soul, O Lord, is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night." Another member of the family put the same question shortly after, and he said in reply, "I am much better; but here am I, let him do with me as seemeth unto him good." When the doctor arrived, he was quite surprised at the unexpected change for the worse, and resolved to call in an additional medical adviser. After consultation, they declared that there was no hope of his recovery, and that he could not survive the middle of the day. He himself did not seem aware of this; on the contrary, he imagined that he was much better, and it was therefore suggested that he should be informed of his approaching end. On his being told that he was dying, and could not survive many hours, he was a little startled, and said, "I was not aware of that, but I knew it could not be long, and the sting of death is taken away." On his being asked whether, in accordance with his earnest and often repeated desire, he had the same peace and hope in the

immediate prospect of death, that he had when he thought himself about to die in the early period of his ministry, he replied shortly, "Yes, I have." Many appropriate and consolatory passages of Scripture were repeated in his hearing, and earnest prayers offered up to God, in which he sometimes appeared to join. His favourite hymn was repeated, and it seemed to give him great satisfaction. It is as follows:—

Ah! I shall soon be dying—  
 Time swiftly glides away,  
 But on my Lord relying,  
 I hail the happy day.

The day when I shall enter  
 Upon a world unknown,  
 My helpless soul I'll venture  
 On Jesus Christ alone.

He once, a spotless victim,  
 Upon Mount Calvary bled;  
 Jehovah did afflict him,  
 And bruise him in my stead.

Hence all my hope arises,  
 Unworthy as I am,  
 My soul most surely prizes,  
 The sin-atoning Lamb.

When these words were repeated, he was aroused from his previous state of apparent insensibility—he assented to the first line, and his lips moved as if attempting to give utterance to the words. After this, one of his family addressed him, saying, "You are now apparently passing through the dark valley of the shadow of death, but we trust you fear no evil, and that to you the sting of death is taken away." He answered, "The sting of death is taken away." The same person again asked him, "Have you no message which you would wish to communicate to your people—no parting word which you would desire to be addressed to them—as



the sum and substance of the instructions which you have been giving them during so many years?" He did not reply to this, being now very low, but the same question being put to him once more, with a view of getting an answer, if possible, he said in feeble and faltering accents—"What can I say more than I have already said? The sum and substance of the whole is comprised in this, 'This God is our God for ever and ever—he will be our guide even unto death, and over death, and ——'" here he stopped, being unable to utter the words, "our portion through eternity," which were evidently those he desired to speak. After this, he sank gradually into a state of complete insensibility, and about half past eleven, 10th Feb., 1841, he gently fell asleep in Jesus, illustrating in his death the saying of infinite wisdom—"Mark the perfect, and behold the upright, for the latter end of that man is peace."

His funeral took place on Tuesday, February 16, 1841, and the whole road, from his house to the place of interment, was lined with an immense crowd of spectators, while the assemblage of mourners was more numerous than any one ever before collected together on a similar occasion in Kilmarnock. We extract from the *Kilmarnock Journal* the following observations upon this solemn and mournful event:—

"In our last, we announced the sudden demise of this much-lamented clergyman, and presented our readers with a short sketch of his life and career as minister of the Low Church here, during a period of more than half a century. We believe we express the sentiments of the community at large, when we state, that no individual's decease was ever more universally regretted, or has called forth a stronger manifestation of unaffected sorrow. The spectacle presented on our streets on Tuesday is unexampled in the history of Kilmarnock: it appeared as if the entire population of the district

had assembled to lament the loss of one, to whose instructions they had been accustomed to look up as to those of a father. From the assemblage of all classes and persuasions, it was not difficult to perceive, that the simple and unassuming manners of the deceased, and his unwearied zeal in the service of his Master, were appreciated even by many who had not enjoyed the benefit of his regular ministrations.

“ On Sabbath, no services were performed in the Low Church, nor in St. Andrew’s, but the event was suitably improved by the clergymen officiating in the other churches—established and dissenting—and eloquent tributes were paid to the eminent qualifications of this distinguished ornament of the sacred profession. On Tuesday, the day of interment, the mourners assembled at the manse shortly before one o’clock, and there never was, perhaps, in Ayrshire such a numerous concourse of mourners as on this occasion. The number computed to be present is fifteen hundred, and the appearance of such a large body in their sable attire was most imposing. This was particularly the case on passing along Waterloo Street, where, to the spectators from the windows, all within the scope of vision was one dense mass of mourners. The assemblage is computed at ten thousand, as the road from the manse to the Low churchyard was lined with spectators. This large attendance was partly owing, we understand, to a considerable number of the public works having stopped work for that day, as a mark of respect to the memory of the deceased. The shops in the principal streets were closed during the ceremony. Arrived at the Low churchyard, the mortal remains were committed to the tomb, amidst the greatest crowd of spectators that we remember to have seen congregated on the same spot for a similar purpose—the burial-ground, its enclosing walls, the windows of the surrounding houses, and every position

commanding a view of the scene, being thronged with anxious, silent, and respectful gazers."

On the Sabbath following, the mournful event was improved to the two congregations whom he was wont to address, by Dr. Stirling of Galston, who had been his colleague for eight years after the removal of Dr. M'Leod to Dundonald, and by Mr Strong, who was his colleague at the time of his death, and has since succeeded him in the first charge. Dr. Stirling selected as his text John xiv. 1—"Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me." In adverting to the character of the deceased, he made the following observations:—

"I have now had the privilege of knowing him for more than twenty-four years, and the longer I knew him, the more I esteemed him. For a long period I have associated with him in habits of the most unreserved friendship, when he had no reason to suspect that a harsh construction would be put upon his words, or a treacherous use made of his confidence; and I can truly say, what I have already said to many of you, that I never heard him utter a sentiment that was not highly suitable to the character of a Christian minister and a child of God. On the contrary, every one who enjoyed the privilege of his acquaintance, must have admired the ease, and grace, and frequency, with which he turned the conversation to divine things; and the delicacy and propriety with which he could blend the objects of Christian faith, and the maxims of Christian holiness, with that rich fund of anecdote, which was the delight of every social circle into which he entered. Such persons must also have remarked how naturally and how joyfully he returned from every place and from every subject to the parish of Kilmarnock, and the spiritual interests of his beloved flock. How did his eye brighten, and every feature beam with delight, when



he could state any symptom of improvement in their spiritual condition! How manifest were the expressions of his sincere sorrow when he was forced to take notice of anything of a different nature! As he obeyed his divine Master, then, in choosing the better part, it pleased that Master to reward him with the possession of almost every object that is truly desirable by man upon earth. Having chosen the clerical profession, there was speedily opened up to him an extensive and interesting field of usefulness; and he was endowed with talents, animated with zeal, and supported with strength, which enabled him to labour in that field with distinguished success. I need not remind you of the clearness and force with which he set forth divine truth, or the affectionate earnestness with which he pressed upon your attention the things that belong to your eternal peace; I need not state here how acceptable was his preaching; I cannot enumerate the many thousands that have eternally profited by it; but I have often been witness of the breathless attention with which you listened to his words, and the tears of sympathy and of satisfaction with which you received the truth from his lips. The very same truths which, when repeated by others, soon became stale and uninteresting, derived an unfading freshness and an increasing beauty from the simple elegance of his language, and the untiring fervour of his delivery. It is not surprising, therefore, that he enjoyed a degree of popularity as a preacher which has seldom fallen to the lot of man. His popularity was derived from the most legitimate source, and therefore it was great and lasting. It did not spring from the partialities or prejudices of party, nor from an ostentatious display of his talents in public or distant places. It arose, under the blessing of God, from the unwearied application of a vigorous and cultivated mind to the single purpose of faithfully performing his proper

pastoral duties ; and, therefore, instead of declining or becoming extinct, like the popularity of many others, it kept pace with his increasing years and experience, and continued unimpaired to the very last. It was one of the most enviable circumstances in his lot, and one for which he frequently expressed his gratitude to God, that he was preserved in health and vigour for more than half a century ; and enabled, with very little assistance, to perform all the arduous duties of his office. Within three days of his death he enjoyed the luxury of addressing you from this place. He spent his last day in the active performance of his duties—he retained his consciousness to the latest moment of life—and he could not so properly be said to die as to fall asleep with the accents of his Redeemer’s praise on his tongue, and the hopes and comforts of the gospel glowing in his heart.”

Mr Strong addressed the mourning congregations from Matthew xxiv. 44 ; and in speaking of his departed friend and fellow-labourer said—“ He was a man of much intellectual acuteness, with a sprightliness of temperament and suavity of address but rarely equalled. His manners were so simple and inoffensive as to disarm hostility ; in private intercourse he could mingle words of pleasantry with words that profit, in a way at once instructive and conciliatory ; and in his public ministrations, you can tell how powerful, often how electrifying was the effect of his great acquaintance with Scripture—his correct, but simple and familiar style—his clear exposition of evangelical doctrine—his faithful expostulation with vice, and minute enforcement of duty—his varied, earnest, pious eloquence. At a period when there was much of the leaven of false doctrine abroad, he set forth the pure word of life ; when a better age came, he was still found preaching Jesus Christ and him crucified ; and even on the last Lord’s day which he

spent on earth, you know better than I how he stood in this place as a zealous witness for the truth, and proclaimed those consolations which delight the believing soul. As in *early life*, by a written covenant which he often renewed, he had dedicated himself to the service of his God and Saviour, so, acting on this covenant, we may surely say, he was found to *the last* at his post, preaching the gospel and ministering to the sick. The sudden announcement of his approaching end naturally surprised, but did not disconcert him : his words were, ‘ Death has lost its sting—what can I say more than I have already said ?—the sum and substance of the gospel are contained in this, “ This God is our God for ever and ever, he will be our guide even unto, or even *over*, death,” ’ as he delighted to translate it ; and free from pain, bearing his dying testimony to the power of the gospel to console in the hour of death, his spirit passed away so gently that it was like ‘ taking of rest in sleep.’ We have laid his head on its low pillow of dust—his voice, which so often by turns aroused and soothed us, shall be heard no more—his body reposes in the narrow bed till the dread morning of the resurrection—then the question will be not, how did we admire ? but, how did we profit by him ? and happy will it be for us, if, mindful of the many paternal instructions of the man of peace, the man of prayer, and faithful unto death, we shall meet him to receive a crown of glory !”

From the preceding memoir, we trust the reader will have formed a pretty fair estimate of the character of the author of the following discourses. He was one of the evangelical party of the Church of Scotland, and joined himself to them when they were few in number, and could lift up only an unheeded and unavailing protest against the principles and practice of the moderates, who were then lording it with iron hand over God’s heritage. He lived, however, to see the time, when



those to whom he thus joined himself increased so much, that they gained the complete ascendancy in the General Assembly, and began to direct their efforts successfully to the reformation and extension of the Church. In his early days, heretical opinions were entertained by many of his brethren; few of them preached the truth in a pure and scriptural manner; and nothing was done to provide additional church accommodation for a rapidly increasing population, even chapels of ease being regarded with suspicion; but before he died, he had the high satisfaction of knowing, as he himself often said, that the gospel was upon the whole preached purely and faithfully, and of beholding the Church actively engaged in extending her boundaries, and sending the words of eternal life to the most distant heathen lands. It was his opinion that patronage was anti-scriptural, and one great source of the corruption and deadness which so long reigned in the Church. While he approved of the principle of the veto, and thought it would work well so long as patrons and presentees acquiesced in its provisions, he was, from the very first, afraid of a collision between Church and State, in consequence of the passing of that act, and would far rather have seen a vigorous effort made to get patronage entirely abolished. The unconstitutional invasions made by the civil courts upon the rights of the Church, often led him to remark, that more strict attention ought to be given to the licensing of young men. It was his decided opinion, that every young man, when licensed, ought to be required to promise solemnly before God, that he will never go to any civil court to obtain an interdict commanding and astringing the ecclesiastical judicatories to ordain him as the pastor of a people opposed to his settlement. Were this done, he thought that the Church would then be able with safety to set at defiance the interdicts of civil courts, should any ever, in such circumstances, be brought to

bear against her ministers and office-bearers. The clergyman or preacher who procured such an interdict, would then be obviously a perjured man, *morally* disqualified for holding the office of the ministry. It was also his serious conviction, that if the spiritual independence of the Church cannot be secured together with the enjoyment of endowments, and if it can be kept in connection with the State only on the grounds explained and laid down by the Court of Session and the House of Lords, that it would be better far to have no establishment, and to have a complete separation between Church and State. He went down to the grave entertaining very gloomy forebodings regarding the prospects of the Church of Scotland, but we hope we can yet discern in the dark cloud lowering over her, the blended rays of the rainbow of the covenant of God's mercy giving presage of a happier day, when she shall secure the full recognition, by the State, of the principles for which she is now contending, and be established long in purity and peace.

As a preacher, it is difficult to describe him in a correct and satisfactory manner. He had clear views of divine truth. From his earliest days he took notes of all the sermons he heard; and when in the Divinity Hall, he drew out a short system, in which were stated, illustrated, and defended, the great articles of the christian faith. This he found of much advantage, although he often said, that had he to commence his studies again, he would direct his attention more exclusively to the Word of God. All his sermons and lectures were the result of careful research, and till his latest days he wrote out one discourse every week; the last one he addressed to his people being composed the week previous to his death. In consequence of this incessant study, his views of divine truth were correct and matured, and his acquaintance with the Scriptures accurate

and extensive. His object was not to exhibit the gospel dressed in gorgeous and lofty phraseology, or to bewilder and amaze by abstract reasonings and metaphysical refinements, but to express his ideas in a clear, simple, and lively style. His grand aim was to convey the truths of the gospel to his hearers in a style level to the meanest understanding, and at the same time so correct, as not reasonably to offend the most fastidious. His manner of delivery was peculiarly graceful, animated, and energetic. His voice was sweet, yet powerful; he laid the emphasis always upon the proper word, and his animation went on increasing toward the close of the discourse. There was nothing like art in his delivery; all was natural, easy, unconstrained, and unaffected. This imparted a charm, an interest, and a power to his discourses, which they never can have when read. It was evident that he was in earnest. Sometimes he entreated sinners, even with tears, to hearken unto the words of life, and flee from the wrath to come. Hence it was, he continued for more than half a century to preach the message of salvation with unabated usefulness and acceptability.

With regard to his domestic life, we may be permitted to say, that he was a kind, affectionate, and indulgent father, exceedingly interested in all that tended to promote the well-being of his family, and never more cheerful and instructive in his conversation than when alone with them. He set before them a pious and consistent example, appearing in his most private hours to be entirely devoted to the great work in which he was engaged. The greater part of his time was spent in reading the Bible and other pious books—in meditation, prayer, and preparation for the duties of the Sabbath; while, in his devotional exercises in family worship, he never forgot to offer up, morning and evening every day, fervent supplication for the peo-



ple of his charge. They seemed to be ever in his mind, and upon his heart. In holding intercourse with his family, he never conversed with them long without directing their attention to religious subjects. He might begin to speak about secular topics, and the news of the day, but he never concluded without speaking of God, and making serious and interesting observations upon important passages of Scripture. In the domestic circle, in a very remarkable and uniform manner, he adorned the doctrine of God our Saviour; and hence we cannot conclude without expressing our earnest desire, that those who knew him, may be stimulated to imitate his example, and become followers of him, so far as he was of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; yea, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them."



# SERMONS.

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## SERMON I.

GOD'S GRACIOUS SUPPLIES EQUAL TO THE BELIEVER'S VARIOUS NECESSITIES.

PHIL. iv. 19.

“ My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

THERE is not a more decisive characteristic of a real Christian, than an increasing sense of guilt, of want, and of unworthiness, and a conviction of the absolute necessity of depending upon the grace and strength of Almighty God. In proportion as he advances in holiness, he grows in humility, and feels the necessity of receiving out of the fulness which it hath pleased the Father should dwell in Christ Jesus, and grace for grace. It is very comfortable for him to reflect, that although his wants are numerous and great, a fulness adequate to their supply is provided. This is more than the wicked and worldly-minded can boast of; for riches, the confidence of the covetous, may be exhausted; a large estate, the pride of the possessor, may be spent; a generous friend, by whom the indigent is supported, may die; but the Christian's consolation is, that his father and friend is immortal, and his fulness inexhaustible. The riches of Christ are unsearchable riches. By them, a countless number have been amply supplied, and still there remains more than enough to afford light and life, consolation and joy unto all his people. Hence



the Apostle declares, in the consolatory words of our text, "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

These words form an important part of the epistle which the Apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians, during his imprisonment at Rome. He had been immediately called by God, as we learn from the Acts of the Apostles, to go over into Macedonia, and preach the gospel at Philippi. This was a city of considerable importance in that country, enlarged, embellished, and fortified by Philip, the king of Macedon, from whom it derived its name. Being directed by God to labour in this place, his labours were crowned with remarkable success. Many by his ministry were effectually called, and a Church was soon collected and organized. Though the nature of his mission would not permit him to remain long with the Christians at Philippi, yet such was his concern for them, that he visited them afterwards, and rejoiced in their joy. To the inspired Apostle they evinced a strong attachment; and as his heart was eminently susceptible of the feeling of friendship, their affection became mutual, and soon acquired uncommon strength. Of this affectionate regard they gave the most solid and convincing proofs; for they not only once sent seasonable supplies to him at Thessalonica, but now again, hearing he was a prisoner at Rome, and supposing he might be in straitened circumstances, they sent him a present by the hands of Epaphroditus, which, as an expression of christian love, he received with gratitude and joy. This he expresses at the tenth verse of the chapter—"But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity." "Ye have well done that ye did communicate

with my affliction," for now, in consequence of your liberal supply, "I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God." Cheerful and liberal charity to the people of God—charity from proper motives and for proper ends, is highly acceptable in the sight of God, and will be sure to meet with a suitable return. Though the persons receiving it may not be able to make the smallest recompense, yet these labours of love shall not be forgotten nor pass unrewarded by a gracious God. The only return which Paul could make to the Philippians for their liberality, was the unfeigned gratitude of his heart, and his fervent prayer to God in their behalf. But although the Apostle could not reward them, that God whom he had chosen as his portion, and served with his spirit in the gospel, was both able and willing to recompense them; and therefore he declares, in the words of the text, "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." In farther discoursing from these words, the method we propose to observe, in dependence upon divine aid, is to point out—

I. Some of those things of which Christians, while they are in this world, stand in need.

II. The grounds of the consolatory declaration made to them.

III. The manner in which God will supply all their wants.

I. We shall point out some of those things of which Christians, while they are in this world, stand in need.

1st. The Christian stands in need of *temporal*

*support.* This arises from his frail and perishing body, which, if not daily nourished by the bounties of providence, would soon languish, decay, and die. Those who have left this mortal scene are freed from the feelings of hunger and thirst, and raised above the need of temporal support. But while we continue in this present state, the comforts of life are absolutely necessary. Nature requires a little, and with a little, through grace, she will be satisfied. The multitude, however, run into the opposite extreme. Not content even with the comforts of life, they create a number of artificial wants, and multiply them to such a degree, that by their mode of living they seem to be unable to subsist upon the necessaries of life. This is the effect of abused abundance, of immoderate gratification, of undue indulgence in luxury. Neither as a man, nor as a Christian, does the believer require these delicacies, nor are they to be reckoned among the necessary articles of life. Food of a plain and salutary, though not of a delicate kind, is all that is necessary or promised. Having *this* food, with raiment, we ought to be content; and if we enjoy more, we have the greater reason to be thankful. Of our temporal wants we are all abundantly sensible; and it is comfortable for the Christian to reflect, that as his heavenly Father knows his natural wants, so, in the use of appointed means, he will provide for them. This truth our Saviour teaches, when guarding his disciples against distrust and excessive carefulness, Luke xii. 29, 30.—“And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink,” that is, with immoderate anxiety, “neither be ye of doubtful mind; for all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.”



2d. The Christian stands in need of *spiritual instruction*. What a noble field, giving abundant scope for our utmost diligence and investigation opens before us in the word and works of the Almighty! The works of nature, the mysteries of providence, and the wonders of redemption, are all placed before us; and we are called to read and hear, to learn and search, that we may be wise unto salvation. These are subjects of which Christians have some knowledge, which they study with ardour, and remember with pleasure, but subjects which they cannot search out and understand, without a divine teacher to guide them in their inquiries, and to direct them in the path of truth. Of this the most intelligent are always most sensible. Their knowledge leads them to perceive their remaining ignorance, and consequently to desire divine instruction. Does the traveller, passing through a foreign country, require a guide—does the scholar, who has just entered on the study of some difficult science, require the instruction of an able master—and must not the Christian, who is passing through this wilderness, and studying to know the deep things of God, stand in need of a heavenly guide, and a divine instructor? Though he may be diligent in the use of means, yet of themselves they are insufficient; though, like the Ethiopian eunuch, he may read the Scriptures, yet how can he understand, except one should guide him? The same Spirit who inspired the sacred volume, alone can open the mind to understand it, and lead the Christian into all the truth. Of this the believer is deeply sensible; and hence we find the Psalmist praying unto the Lord, Ps. xxv. 4, 5—“Shew me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.”

3d. The Christian stands in need of *divine protection*. While in this world, he is in the country of his enemies, exposed to their fierce and frequent attacks, to dangers which he cannot by his own sagacity foresee, or power prevent. Of himself he is weak and feeble, and amidst so many snares and dangers, entirely unequal to his own defence; his enemies in secret plot his destruction, and their arrows fly thick around him every day. These would certainly prove fatal, were not God, as his shield, continually to defend him. The wicked and ungodly hate and persecute him, and if not restrained by the grace of God, would accomplish his destruction. A soldier, in ancient times, had not greater need of a shield to defend him from the arrows of the enemy; a feeble flock has not greater need of the watchful care of a shepherd to protect them, nor a flying army of a stronghold to defend them from a pursuing foe, than the Christian has of divine protection, while surrounded and assaulted with so many enemies. Without this defence, he cannot be safe for a single moment; but enjoying it, he is in security amid numerous surrounding dangers; for, "as birds flying, so will the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also he will deliver it; and passing over he will preserve it." Is. xxxi. 5.

4th. While the Christian remains in this world, he needs *the constant communication of spiritual strength*. As the ability of which he is possessed was originally derived from God, so its continuance and increase entirely depend upon the promised supplies of divine grace. Unsupported by divine aid, he cannot stand, or perform any duty acceptably to God; strength, therefore, must daily be communicated from on high, and, although the mode of its conveyance may be mysterious, its reality is

not to be doubted or denied. As we depend upon the bounties of providence for the bodily vigour we enjoy as creatures, so, as Christians, we equally depend upon the grace of God for the maintenance or increase of our spiritual strength. The strongest believer will acknowledge that of himself he is weak and insufficient, unable to perform any duty, to resist any temptation, or to bear any trial, however inconsiderable. Without renewed supplies of the Spirit, the easiest duty will be too difficult, the smallest temptation too strong, and the lightest affliction too heavy for him. This truth the Christian believes, and therefore he exercises a close and constant dependance upon God for the necessary supplies of divine strength. His experience in the divine life convinces him still more of the necessity of this dependance, for although at first he was apt to be self-confident, and, like Peter, to rely upon the strength of his own resolution, yet afterwards he adopts the language of the Apostle, "not that I am sufficient of myself to think any thing as of myself, but my sufficiency is of God." He can now say with the ancient Church, "truly in the Lord *alone* have I righteousness and *strength*, and in him will I ever glory, for the Lord God is my *strength* and my song, he also is become my salvation." When feeling the power of corruption, and assailed by external foes, sensible of his weakness, he will say with Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. xx. 12— "I have no might against this great company that cometh against me; neither know I what to do: but mine eyes are upon thee."

5th. The Christian stands in need of *fatherly correction*. He is, while in this world, in a state of discipline, training up, for the inheritance of the saints in light. His errors and misconduct, his wayward passions, and frequent disobedience,



render correction absolutely necessary for carrying on this great and important work. His crosses and disappointments are, indeed, as useful as his comforts, and both of them shall work together for his spiritual good. In the school of affliction he learns some important lessons, which can be taught him nowhere else. There his ear is opened to discipline, and he listens to the instructions of heavenly wisdom. His afflictions are necessary to convince him of his sins, to humble his pride, to wean his heart from a present world, to mortify his corruption, to soften his heart and open it to the feelings of sympathy and compassion, to bring into exercise the various graces of the christian life, and to induce him to long for that happy world where affliction shall be unknown, because it shall be unnecessary. In this world, then, correction is absolutely needful for our improvement, and, when accompanied with the blessing of God, is productive of the most salutary and beneficial effects. "Though no affliction for the present is joyous but grievous, nevertheless afterwards it yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness, unto them who are exercised thereby." Of the propriety and necessity of these corrections, the Christian may be insensible; he may ascribe them to the wrath, and not to the love of God, and imagine he could have done well enough without them; but his heavenly Father, who loves him, sees they are requisite, and therefore will not withhold them—"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." As every affliction is brought upon the Christian for some necessary purpose, so he shall be a gainer and not a loser by the trial. The furnace is intended to purify, and not to consume; and, therefore, he shall lose nothing of his weight or worth, by being thrown into it. He shall

leave only some of his dross behind him, and come out of it like gold purified and refined. Every *trial* shall be a *triumph* to his faith, and promote his progressive sanctification. The rod is not more necessary in the education of a froward child, than correction in promoting the improvement of a real Christian. As it is necessary and useful, therefore, he should not only submit to it with patience, but receive it with gratitude and joy. Jas. i. 2, 3—“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations,” or trials, “knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.” 1 Pet. i. 6, 7—“Now for a season (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”

6th. The Christian stands in need of *spiritual consolation under the distresses of life, and at the hour of death*. The numerous afflictions of this life demand abundant consolation, and hence it is that God hath amply provided in the Scriptures for the comfort of his people. Without this, the believer could not endure the distresses to which he is exposed. But this upholds his sinking spirits, and preserves him from fainting in the day of his calamity. The consolations of God are proportioned to the afflictions of his people; they are neither few in number, nor small in their efficacy, and have sometimes been felt to be so full and strong, as for a season to banish every sorrow. They have flowed into the hearts of God's people like a copious river, carrying every thing before them; converting their sorrow into joy, their darkness into light, and their grief into gladness. But although these consolations are necessary during the distresses

of life, there is a period approaching when they will be found to be still more requisite—we mean the awful hour of death. This period is fixed in the councils of heaven, and every passing moment speeds it on. When it arrives, we shall be more sensible of our need of the supporting grace of God than we can be at present. The world, with all its vanities, shall then retire, and eternity, with its awful realities, open upon our view. We shall then stand upon the verge of time, and the soul shall look forward with trembling expectation to a judgment and eternity to come. In this solemn season, the soul, conscious of its weakness, and concerned for its safety, shall look around for some solid support, some foundation upon which it may rest, and safely enter into the invisible world. What grace and comfort are necessary to support the heart in this interesting period, to preserve the believer's faith from failing, and to enable him to die in such a manner as to glorify God, enjoy peace in his own mind, and edify others around him! The full need of support in this solemn hour, the dying alone know; nor shall we understand it until we are called to leave this world. With perplexing thoughts, however, about this event, we are not to distress ourselves. Let us only be careful now to *live* unto the Lord, and we may depend upon his love and faithfulness for giving us *dying* grace for a *dying* season. But this naturally leads us to consider

II. The grounds of this consolatory declaration made to believers: “my God shall supply all your need.”

1st. The Christian may believe that God will supply all his wants, *because he is his God and Father in Christ Jesus*. It is the distinguishing characteristic of every real Christian, that he chooses



God in Christ, as his sure and suitable, his satisfying and everlasting portion. While others are loving and pursuing the vanities of this world, and saying to this or the other idol, "Thou art our God;" the Christian says, "The Lord is my God and portion, and I will hope in him continually." God in Christ is the object of his freest choice, of his firmest trust, and supreme delight. He is his God in covenant, and he can rejoice in him in every condition as his father and his friend. He is his father by creation, and by creating him again in Christ Jesus; a father who loves him with more than parental affection, and who, being good in himself, will give good things unto all his children who ask them of him. He is a friend who sticketh closer than any brother, whose friendship is inviolable and active. Is this gracious God, then, the Christian's God and portion? Does he stand to him in such endearing relations? and shall not the Christian's wants be abundantly supplied? Is he the God of nature, and does he feed the ravens when they cry? and will he not feed his own people with food convenient for them? Will he not instruct them by his word and Spirit, defend them by his power, strengthen them by his grace, correct them when they go astray, comfort and support them under all the afflictions of life, and by his rod and staff strengthen them in the hour of death, enabling them to recline in peace their dying heads upon his loving heart, and to breathe out their souls in the language of faith and triumph—"Into thine hands we commit our departing spirits, for thou hast redeemed us, O God of our salvation"? Yes, Christian; that God, who was David's shepherd, Jeremiah's portion, and Paul's God, is also thy God and father in Christ Jesus; and, therefore, he will assuredly sup-

ply all thy wants according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

2d. The Christian's wants shall be abundantly supplied, *because all fulness resides in Christ Jesus for this great and important purpose.* It hath pleased the Father, says inspired wisdom, that in Christ Jesus all fulness should dwell. He is possessed of this mediatorial fulness, that his people may receive from it, and grace for grace. What a comfortable and animating truth is this to real Christians! How exactly is it calculated to support them under a painful sense of their great and manifold wants! Though they are nothing, and have nothing that is *good* of their own, yet in Christ Jesus they have all things—merit to procure the pardon of all their sins, the Spirit to sanctify their polluted natures, and grace to help them in every time of need. It is impossible for a Christian to feel any want which the fulness of Christ is not able to supply. As there is a fulness of water in the ocean for the supply of vapour—a fulness of light and heat in the sun for the illumination and benefit of the material world; so there is abundance in Christ Jesus for the supply of the wants of his people during their residence in this world. This is a fulness which, though communicable, is inexhaustible; for it is neither lessened by communication nor increased by restraint. Will the spring fail that is fed by the ocean? will the world be involved in universal darkness, while the sun remains in the heaven to enlighten it? and shall a Christian want, and his wants not be supplied, while Christ Jesus is possessed of fulness for this purpose? No: it is impossible. From this infinite treasury, all the necessities of Christians have been supplied, and the store remains undiminished. If Christians, therefore, are straitened, it must be

in themselves, and not in Christ Jesus. Let them open their mouths wide, and he will fill them abundantly.

3d. God shall relieve the wants of Christians, *because he hath uniformly supplied the necessities of his own people in every age of the world.* His people, considered in themselves, are poor and needy, dependent upon him, not only for the common bounties of his providence, but also for the rich blessings of his grace. This is the character of all believers; not only of those who are mean and indigent, but of such as are raised to rank and opulence in life. David declares concerning himself, Ps. xl. 17—“ I am poor and needy ; yet the Lord thinketh upon me.” What is the history of the saints in sacred scripture, but the history of their wants and weakness, their sorrows and sufferings, their dangers and distresses, and of the manner in which God strengthened and supported them ? Their hearts have been so deeply penetrated with a sense of his goodness, that they have been led to call upon their souls and all within them to magnify his holy name. Ps. ciii. 2—4—“ Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits : who forgiveth all thine iniquities ; who healeth all thy diseases ; who redeemeth thy life from destruction ; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies.” Now hath God in this manner uniformly supplied the wants of his people—hath he never left them destitute or forlorn—hath he made his grace sufficient for them, so that they have never lacked anything that was truly good for them ? Is he the same God still, without any variableness or the least shadow of turning ? What is the conclusion we are warranted to draw ? Is it not the conclusion of our text, that God will supply all our wants according to his riches in



glory by Jesus Christ? This inference is strengthened by the Christian's past experience. When he reviews his byepast life, and the measures of the divine providence and grace, he must acknowledge that goodness and mercy have continued to follow him, and that he has been wonderfully protected, provided for, and supported; and will not he who has delivered, yet deliver? he who has relieved all our wants, continue to supply them? Could we not trust a friend, the sincerity of whose friendship we had tried, or depend upon a father whose affection we had long experienced? and may we not trust to our best friend, and most merciful heavenly father, who hath hitherto supplied all our wants, that he will continue to supply them, and never leave us until he has done us all the good of which he has spoken in his holy word? But this leads us to observe, in the

4th and last place, that the Christian's need shall be abundantly supplied, *because God hath graciously promised in his word to do this.* The promises of God are the great support of the real Christian; they are the foundation of his faith and patience, and his great encouragement in prayer; they are firmly believed and fervently pled by all who are exercised unto godliness; they revive their hearts under spiritual languishment, strengthen them in weakness, and comfort them in the day of distress; they are found in rich variety through the word of God; and there is not a situation to which a believer can be reduced, but some corresponding promise may be found in Scripture. Thus, do believers stand in need of temporal support, as we showed you in the preceding part of the discourse? Then this is graciously promised, and shall be bestowed, Isaiah xxxiii. 16—"Bread shall be given him, his waters shall be made sure." Do they stand

in need of spiritual instruction? This also is promised, Ps. xxv. 8—"Good and upright is the Lord, therefore will he teach sinners in the way." Do they stand in need of divine protection? This, likewise, is matter of promise, Ps. xci. 4—"He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler." Do they stand in need of an increase of spiritual strength? This blessing is also promised, Zech. x. 12—"And I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the Lord." Do they require fatherly correction? This also is promised, "Ps. lxxxix. 30—32—"If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes." Will they stand in need of consolation and support at the hour of death? This also is graciously promised, Ps. xxiii. 4—"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me;" and Ps. lxxiii. 26—"My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever." Finally, do they need any other good thing which hath not been mentioned? Every good thing is included in these comprehensive promises:—Ps. xxxiv. 9, 10—"O fear the Lord, ye his saints; for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." Ps. lxxxiv. 11.—"The Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Are these the promises of the true and faithful God?

and shall they not be accomplished unto those who are in Christ Jesus, in whom they are all YEA as to their *certainty*, and AMEN as to their *fulfilment*, unto the glory of God? Do not these promises lay a solid foundation for the belief of the declaration in our text, "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus"? "Hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and will he not bring it to pass?"

We now proceed to show you

III. The manner in which God will supply the Christian's wants—"according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

1st. God will supply the wants of his people *suitably*, or in a manner agreeable to their nature and diversified necessities. Much of the wisdom and goodness of God appears in the provision which he has made for the various creatures of his power. As their natures and modes of life are different, so he hath provided sustenance suited to their natures and capacities. The inhabitants of the deep find suitable food in the mighty ocean; the animals which graze in the fields, find in the grass and herbage with which the earth is clothed and adorned, proper supply; and man himself, dependent also upon the field, is fed with food convenient for him. In this wonderful provision of providence the wisdom and goodness of God are apparent, and ought to be acknowledged and praised by the sons of men. But the same wisdom and goodness are displayed, if possible, in a still higher degree, in the suitable supply of the Christian's spiritual necessities. These are numerous and diversified; but as they are all well known to God, so they are amply and properly provided for in the fulness of Christ Jesus. It is



impossible for a Christian to feel any spiritual want, to which this fulness does not afford a suitable supply. Here is milk for babes, and meat for men; medicine for the sick, and cordials for the comfortless; strength for the weak, and succour for the tempted; light for such as are in darkness, and life for the dead. In short, the provision of a wise steward is not more suited to the wants of a numerous family, or the prescriptions of a skilful physician to the situation of his patients, than the communications of Christ Jesus are adapted to the particular cases of all the children of his family. Whatever is good in itself, and suited to their situation, they may be assured the Lord will give, and he will bestow upon them nothing of an opposite nature. In their blind, misjudging minds, indeed, they may imagine that other things are necessary than those which he bestows; and, like persons under disease, they may desire things that would prove hurtful to them; but as the Lord is a God of judgment, and sees that they would be injurious to them, in his mercy and love he kindly withholds them. He always consults his people's *profit*, and not their *pleasure*, and will therefore supply their need in a manner that is suited to their situation and circumstances, and calculated to promote their spiritual improvement and growth in grace.

2d. God will supply the wants of his people *seasonably*, or at such a time as is requisite and proper. The wisdom and goodness of God are not only conspicuous in providing suitable supply for all his creatures, but in bestowing it upon them in due season. The Psalmist notices this in regard to the support of the inferior animals, and the same is observable with respect to the supply of real Christians. Ps. cxlvi. 15—"The eyes of all

wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season." God not only gives his people what is suitable for them, but he confers it at the season when it is needful. Were it not bestowed in this manner, it would lose much of its value. Though the bounties of providence are indispensably necessary for the support of natural life, yet there are some seasons when they are peculiarly needful, when the cravings of hunger and thirst are so pressing that without some immediate supply, we could not exist. In like manner, although we continually depend upon the grace of God, and the supplies of his Spirit, yet there are some seasons in the Christian life, when they are peculiarly needful. And surely we must have been extremely inattentive to the conduct of providence, if we have not remarked how he hath sent us supplies in time of need. "When I said my foot slippeth, thy mercy, O Lord, held me up." When we have been called to new and difficult duties; when we have been visited with severe and sharp affliction, and ready to sink under its weight, hath not his grace been sufficient for us, and his mercy come seasonably to our relief? When Paul was forsaken of all men, the Lord stood by him; when his afflictions abounded, his consolations were proportioned; and God was a present help to him in every time of need. The gracious supplies of heaven will not be afforded sooner than necessary, but they will not be deferred a moment longer than they are requisite. God, who is infinitely wise and good, knows the precise time when these supplies are needful, and when this period arrives, he will immediately bestow them. This may teach Christians the propriety of daily depending upon God for the seasonable supplies of his Spirit. For these they must wait upon him with patience; for, though their prayers

may be delayed, they are not denied; and though the promises are not immediately fulfilled, they are not falsified. Hab. ii. 3—"The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry."

3d. God will supply the wants of his people *abundantly*, or in a manner becoming his own rich and glorious grace. This is the circumstance marked in the text—"He will supply all your need according to his riches in glory," or his glorious riches, "by Christ Jesus." When persons give for the support of the indigent in this world, their liberality bears some proportion to their station and affluence. While the widow throws in her mite, the rich cast in of their abundance. This, indeed, is not always the case; for the rich are sometimes covetous and worldly-minded, and do not give according to their ability, or the wants of their indigent brethren. This, however, is never the case with the giver of all good, when he supplies the wants of his people. As he is infinitely rich, so he is inconceivably liberal; he opens his liberal hand, and abundantly supplies all their returning wants. Ps. xxxvi. 8—"They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures." Contemplate, Christians, the infinite fulness and glory of God, and you may, in some measure, conceive what your supply shall be. Consider the infinite fountain, and you may be enabled to form some idea of the streams. The believer, with regard to temporal comforts, may be poorly supplied; nay, he may sometimes be in straits; but as to spiritual blessings, he is never straitened. Does God pardon? He pardons abundantly. Is. lv. 7—"And to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Does he cause the



Spirit to descend? He sheds him down abundantly. Tit. iii. 6—"Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." Is a spiritual feast provided for their entertainment? It is abundant; and hence the invitation, "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." When he bestows grace, he makes it to abound towards them, and he will minister unto them an entrance abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The Christian, therefore, is straitened only in his own narrow capacity, which, like the widow's vessels, is unable to contain the abundance ready to be poured into him; and hence God, desirous of communicating more of himself to his people, says, Ps. lxxxi. 10, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."

4th. God will supply the wants of his people *continually*, or without any intermission. As Christians in this world are in perpetual spiritual indigence, so a constant supply is necessary, and shall be conveyed to them. They daily stand in need of the bounties of providence, to support their bodies, and they continually depend upon the influences of the Spirit, to preserve and strengthen the divine life in their souls. Without new communications of light and life from above, Christians could not live, and be happy for a single moment. As these continued supplies are necessary, so we are assured they shall be afforded to them; for concerning the church it is promised, Is. xxvii. 3, "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." The resources of the poor in this world may fail, and their temporal supplies may be cut off; a friend who has long supported them by his liberality may die, and they may be left destitute;

but this can never be the case with the Christian as to his spiritual support. The fountain whence he is supplied is perennial; and the friend on whom he relies is immortal. The mercy of God shall continue to follow him, as the water did the Israelites in the desert, until he reach the promised land. The love of God to him is everlasting, his goodness endureth for ever. Hence it is promised, Is. lviii. 11, "The Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not."

5th. God will supply the wants of his people *tenderly*, or with all the affection of the kindest friend. This adds an unspeakable charm to every favour which they receive. Although the indigent may sometimes obtain supply in this world, yet it is often granted with so much reluctance, and bestowed with so much asperity, as in a great measure to diminish, if not to destroy its value. But all the favours and blessings which God bestows upon his people, are freely conferred and tenderly bestowed. His heart, so to speak, is in his hand, his favours proceed from affection, and his love is inscribed upon them. A father does not supply the wants of his beloved children with so much tenderness, as the Father of mercies supplies the necessities of those who love and serve him. This is the beautiful simile employed by the Psalmist, ciii. 13, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them who fear him." In all their afflictions he is afflicted; the angel of his presence saves them; in his love and pity he redeems them; and he loves and carries them as in the days of old. Zion, indeed, in her unbelief, may say, the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me; but

Zion's God says, Is. xlix. 15, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." The good Samaritan did not so tenderly bind up the wounds of the man in distress, and generously supply his wants, as the God of consolation binds up the broken-hearted Christian, and comforts all that mourn. In the performance of this service to his people, he feels the greatest pleasure; and hence it is said, Jer. xxxii. 41, that "he rejoices over them to do them good." But in the

6th and last place, God will supply the wants of his people *through Christ Jesus*. He is constituted the great and sole medium of communication between God and men. As God is infinitely holy, so he cannot in consistency with his nature and perfections, maintain any friendly intercourse with sinful creatures, except through a Mediator. Blessed be his name! a Mediator is provided and revealed for this great and important design; for as there is one God, so there is "one Mediator betwixt God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all." It is by Christ Jesus that God reveals himself to sinful men; and it is through Christ Jesus that sinners must approach to God. He "is the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by him." It is by Christ Jesus, as our New Testament altar, that all our services and sacrifices must be offered unto God; and it is through him we must expect to receive from God every necessary and promised blessing. As Christ Jesus purchased all the blessings of the covenant for his people by his most precious blood, so he is employed, as the king of Zion, in dispensing them to the objects of his love. Believers are, therefore, said to be blessed in Christ Jesus with



every spiritual blessing. In order to receive these, it is necessary to be united to him; for union to Christ must always precede communion with him. All the mercy and grace which have been bestowed upon sinners since the foundation of the world, have been communicated to them through Christ Jesus, and the happiness of heaven shall flow to them through the same glorious channel. It is through Christ Jesus that Christians in this world obtain the pardon of their sins, and the supplies of the Spirit, grace to assist them, and comfort to support them; it is by him they have access unto that grace wherein believers stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God; and it is through and by him that the crown of glory, and the felicity of a future world, shall be conferred upon them. Eternal life is the gift of God, *through* Jesus Christ our Lord. Hence he is represented, in the book of the Revelation, as leading and feeding his people in the celestial world. Rev. vii. 17—"For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

We now conclude with some application of this subject: and in the

1st. place, from what hath been said, you may see one leading feature in the character of every true Christian. He is one who is humble and self-denied, and deeply sensible of his spiritual wants. He is one who sees and feels that of himself he has nothing, and can do nothing, that is good, and that it is only by Christ strengthening him he can do all things. He is one, therefore, who is daily growing in humility and in dependance upon Christ Jesus. He feels and discovers an increasing hatred to sin and love to holiness, and desires to wait upon the institutions of religion with a

humble and hungry heart. Were Christians possessed of more of this humility and poverty of spirit, they would derive greater benefit from attendance upon ordinances ; for Luke i. 53, " He hath filled the hungry with good things ; and the rich," or the full, " he hath sent empty away."

2d. From this subject, you may see the absolute necessity of vital union to the Lord Jesus Christ. Without this union we cannot be Christians, or have any part in the blessings of a Redeemer's purchase. " If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his." And Christ Jesus must be "*in us* except we be reprobates." This union is necessary to the conveyance of every spiritual blessing. Can a branch grow that is not in the vine ? Can it derive sap and nourishment from the stem ? Must it not, if severed from it, become dry and withered, fit only to be cast into the fire and burned ? Can a professing Christian, if not united to Jesus Christ, derive any saving benefit from him ? Upon this union, his justification and sanctification, his progress and perseverance in the christian life, depend ; for union must precede communion, as life does action, or a cause its effect. Alas ! how many professing disciples of Christ are not united truly to him ! They remain like loose stones scattered about, but not built on Jesus Christ, the foundation. They may call themselves Christians, and be so denominated by others, but if they remain thus unconnected with him, he will say unto them at last, " depart from me, I never knew you, ye workers of iniquity."

3d. From this subject, you may learn, that it is the duty of every believer to pray to God for this promised supply. Although God has said that he will supply the wants of his people, yet this declaration by no means supersedes the necessity of

fervent prayer. On the contrary, it lays a firm foundation for the performance of this duty. The promises of God are a great encouragement to prayer, and must regulate our petitions at a throne of grace. We must not only pray *because* he hath promised, but *as* he has promised, and the prayer of faith shall be heard. Though God promised to his people a new heart, and a right spirit, yet he says, Ezek. xxxvi. 37, "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." Let Christians, therefore, "be careful for nothing, but in every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, make known their requests unto God."

4th. From what hath been said, we may see the sin and folly of the Christian in departing from God, and going to any other source for those supplies which he alone can bestow. Are you in want of any thing that is good for you? and are not all things to be found in God? Why, then, should you forsake him? Let the men of *this* world, who know not God, go to it for comfort and relief; but let Christians go to their God in Christ Jesus, who has promised to supply all their wants. Apply *any* where, *every* where else, and sorrow or disappointment shall attend you. Hos. v. 13— "When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb: yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound." "Behold, therefore, we come unto thee, (let all real Christians say), for thou art the Lord our God!"

5th. From this subject you may also learn under what obligations believers are laid, to love and serve the Lord their God. As God is a being infinitely amiable, so he ought to be loved with supreme affection by all his rational creatures; but he ought



especially to be loved by his people, for what he has done for them, for what he hath promised to do, and shall perform. Are we not bound to love a friend who has generously supplied our wants, and promised still to relieve us in time of need? and must we not be bound to love our best friend, and bountiful benefactor, who not only does us good himself, but gives ability and inclination to others to assist us? Yes, we owe to him the whole love of our hearts, and the entire obedience of our lives. "O love the Lord all ye his saints, because the Lord doth *guide* and *guard* the faithful."

6th. And to conclude, from what hath been said, you may see the peculiar happiness of the people of God, and friends of Jesus. They are happy because all their wants shall be supplied. Perhaps, in the prospect of engaging in duty, and being exposed to danger and temptation, they may be discouraged, and be led to say, under a sense of their wants and weakness, what shall we do? The declaration of the text is sufficient to support them—"My God shall supply all your need." The Lord shall go with his people wherever they go; his wisdom shall be their guide, his power their protection, and his fulness their supply. Depend upon his grace, believe his promise, and wait for its accomplishment. We conclude the whole with the comfortable assurance, Ps. xxxiv. 10, "The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." Amen!

## SERMON II.

### THE CHRISTIAN CAUTIONED AGAINST FEAR.

ISAIAH xli. 10.

“Fear thou not ; for I am with thee : be not dismayed ; for I am thy God : I will strengthen thee ; yea, I will help thee ; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.”

FEAR is an emotion of the mind which arises from the apprehension of threatened or impending evil. Ever since our fatal apostacy from God, it has maintained its place in our hearts ; and although not always sinful in itself, yet, like shame and sickness, it is one of the sad and mournful consequences of our transgression. Previous to the introduction of sin, man was a stranger to this feeling ; for being at peace with God, and having no evil to dread, all was then smooth and smiling without him, as all was peace and harmony within. But as fear is now become one of the most powerful principles in human nature, and has a commanding influence upon our conduct and behaviour, it is highly necessary for our peace and comfort that it be kept under proper regulation. Not to be afraid, indeed, where there is great cause for fear, which is the case with every sinner, is false courage ; but to be afraid when there is no reason, and dismayed when there is no danger, is, in the real Christian, weak, pusillanimous, and hurtful. There is nothing which has a greater tendency to enfeeble and distract his mind, to destroy his comfort, and obstruct his progress. This is contrary to the nature of the christian religion, unsuitable to his state and character as a Christian, reflects the greatest dishonour upon God, who is gracious and almighty, and deprives his soul of that consolation and peace

which he might otherwise enjoy. As this fear, then, when improperly indulged, is hurtful in itself, so it is offensive unto Almighty God, who takes pleasure in the peace and happiness of his people; rejoices over to do them good, and desires them to place in him the most unreserved trust and confidence. Accordingly, we find him, in Sacred Scripture, gently chiding his people for surrendering themselves to despondence and deep alarm, and proposing to their faith such considerations as are exactly calculated to remove them. Remarkable in this light are the words which we have just now read as the subject of the following discourse. Under the distressing fears which they felt and discovered from a view of the number, power, and policy of their enemies, their gracious and merciful God thus addresses them, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

In discoursing on this subject, we humbly propose, through divine aid—

I. To mention and illustrate some of those things of which even the people of God are apt occasionally to be afraid.

II. To consider and illustrate the comfortable truths which are here suggested to their attention, and show you how they are calculated to remove their fears.

And O that the Lord may enable us so to speak and hear upon this comfortable subject, that every desponding fear may be dispelled, every doubt removed from the minds of his own people, and that we may be filled with joy and peace!



I. Some of those things of which even the people of God are prone to be afraid.

1st. The people of God are apt to entertain a slavish fear of *God himself*. A reverential and filial fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, and the foundation of all religion. This is due to him from all his intelligent offspring, and will ever be preserved upon the minds, and apparent in the conduct, of all who know and obey him. "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name, for thou only art holy." "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be feared, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." And, therefore, when God is served acceptably, it will be with reverence and godly fear. But the fear of which we are now speaking is of a quite different nature. It is slavish and sinful; founded upon false or mistaken views of God; unsuitable to the Christian's relation to him, and his relation unto his people. It is the dread of him as an avenging and implacable adversary, and causes the Christian to tremble in his presence, to think of him with terror, and to perform all his services to him with consternation and dismay. While the Christian is under the influence of this servile fear, instead of thinking upon God with pleasure and delight, and approaching to him with humble, filial boldness, he thinks upon him with terror, and dreads the execution of his threatened vengeance. Some such fear, it would seem, was experienced by the pious Asaph, as he himself informs us, Ps. lxxvii. 3, "I remembered God, and was troubled;" and also by David as he declares, Ps. cxix. 120, "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments."

2d. The people of God are apt to be afraid of *the persecution of wicked men*. This is abundantly evident from the words of our blessed Lord,

Luke xii. 4, "I say unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." Although this is the utmost to which the rage and power of wicked men can go, and although the Christian's better part and dearest interest are safe beyond their reach, yet, as suffering is terrible to humanity, especially when clad in all the horrors which persecuting ingenuity can devise, it may shake the firmness of the inexperienced Christian, and fill his breast with terror and dismay. The cruel mockery of the world too is hard to be endured, and is, therefore, mentioned as one of the severest trials to which primitive believers were exposed, Heb. xi. 36, "and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment." These are apt to intimidate the Christian's mind, and to induce him to make undue compliances in order to avoid them. Hence, the fear of man and the scorn of the world often bring a snare; they shake the Christian's trust in God, and lead him into the commission of sin. Such seems to have been the situation of Israel in this context, and therefore they are warned of their danger, and cautioned against compliance with the temptation. What though the islands saw it and were moved—what though armies numerous and powerful were assembled—what though the heathen should rage against them, and threaten their destruction? They were not to be afraid. "Fear not," says the Lord, "for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God."

3d. The people of God are apt to be afraid of the power, the policy, and temptations of *the wicked one*. That such a powerful and malicious spirit exists, will not be denied by any who believe divine revelation. Therein we are informed that he was the chief leader of the numerous host of

angels who, on account of their rebellion, were banished the abodes of bliss, and are now reserved, under chains of darkness, unto the judgment of the great day. Possessed as he is of great power, and stimulated by the fell passions of malice and envy, he is equally an enemy to the counsels of God and the salvation of men. He goes about continually, as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Early he began the work of destruction, and he will continue it until the end. Our first parents he seduced from their allegiance unto heaven; he sought the destruction of the patient patriarch Job; he moved David to number the people; he persuaded Ahab, to his ruin, to fight against the king of Syria; stood at the right hand of Joshua to oppose him; and urged our Saviour, in the wilderness, to the horrid crime of self-destruction. Impelled by the same passions, and enraged to see his subjects rescued from his dark dominion, he is furious and indefatigable, and the servants of God are the objects of his keenest malice and constant hatred. He wisely suits his temptations to their tempers and dispositions, and uses every mean and method in his power to ensnare and to destroy them. At one time he threatens, at another he allures; now he tempts to presume, and now to despair. The pleasures of sin he represents as innocent, and constant watchfulness as unnecessary anxiety and unfashionable precision. He knows how to catch their attention and to inflame their desires, to rouse their passions and to take advantage of their weaknesses, and thus to lead them to sin against God, and wound their own souls. Against this crafty and powerful adversary the people of God maintain a daily opposition, for "they wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness



of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." But when they consider his power and policy; when they consider how many strong men have fallen before him, and reflect upon their own weakness, and ignorance, they are apt to be afraid of him—to fear lest he may gain an advantage over them, and they may be left to fall in the unequal combat, to the wounding of their consciences, the discredit of religion, and the offending of their God.

4th. The people of God are apt to be afraid of *being again brought under the condemning and reigning power of sin*. Sin is indeed the most terrible thing in the whole universe of God. It is this which renders God an enemy to man, and man an enemy to himself. It is this which hath armed the creation against us; which gives affliction its spear, conscience its arrows, death its sting, and hell its torment. It is this which rendered the sufferings of the Son of God in human nature necessary, for without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. In the day of conviction, the Christian saw himself under its guilt, and was afraid; he also beheld the Saviour as the propitiation for sin, and as the end of the law for righteousness to all who believe and obey him. To Jesus, then, under a sense of guilt, he fled, in him he believed, and through him he obtained the forgiveness of his sins, according to the riches of divine grace. Being found in Christ Jesus, to him there is now no condemnation; he walks not after the flesh, but after the spirit; he is washed, and justified, and sanctified, and the power of sin begun to be subdued in his soul, shall never again obtain dominion over him, for he is not under the law, but under grace. He is completely justified in the sight of God, accepted in the beloved, and shall

assuredly be kept, by the power of God, from sin, through faith unto salvation. But the reality and comfortable knowledge of this are perfectly distinct ; for although the believer in his justification is freed from condemnation, has actually passed from death unto life, yet he does not always enjoy the immediate sense, or comfortable assurance, of this ; nor, though he may, upon some happy occasion, obtain it, and hear the voice of mercy addressing him, “ Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee,” is he able constantly to preserve it. Upon the renewed commission of sin, new guilt is contracted, new fears arise and fill his soul with perplexity and distress. He feels that sin has still an unhappy influence over him, and he questions if such an influence is consistent with a state of safety and acceptance with God. His numerous and aggravated transgressions arise in awful magnitude before him, they set themselves as in battle array against him, and losing sight of the grace and mercy of God in Christ Jesus, he is filled with despondency and distressing fears. Now he is apt to call in question the very foundation of his hope, and to express himself in the mournful language of the prophet personifying the Church—Lam. iii. 18, “ I said, my strength and my hope is perished from the Lord ; thy fierce wrath goeth over me, and thy terrors have cut me off.”

5th. The people of God may be afraid *in the prospect of some difficult duties, which they may be called to perform, or of some sharp afflictions which they may have occasion to endure.* Conscious of their own weakness, they are sensible that of themselves they are not sufficient to think a good thought, far less to perform a good action. The easiest duty, if unaided by divine grace, would be too difficult for them, and the lightest load too

heavy. How much more those that are hard and severe, that have hitherto been untried, and from which they have happily been exempted! In the prospect of engaging in these duties, then—duties solemn and important—they are apt to be dispirited and dejected; fear may fill their hearts, and they may be led to say, “we know not what to do, but our eyes are towards thee.” This fear, too, they are apt to experience in prospect of sharp afflictions. These being contrary to their natural inclination, for no affliction for the present is joyous, but grievous; being clad, too, in black and awful colours, Christians may wish to avoid. When, therefore, they see them approaching, when, like Paul, they know that bonds and afflictions are awaiting them—afflictions tedious and severe in their persons, in their families, or circumstances—they may be intimidated by the dreadful prospect, and afraid that they shall not be able to act in such a manner as shall be agreeable to the will of God, suitable to their Christian character, and have a tendency to promote the glory of the great Lord and giver of all. As a soldier who has received a difficult and important charge, may be afraid of his failing in its execution, and his fear produce excessive carefulness and unmanly trembling, so the Christian’s fear upon these occasions, may damp his spirits and oppress his mind, when he is called to arise and be doing, to be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

6th. The people of God may be afraid of *final apostacy and of coming short of heaven*. Such is the constitution of the human mind, that when the heart is set upon any object of very great importance, and of the enjoyment of which it is not absolutely certain, it must always feel a proportional degree of fear and of anxiety lest it should



lose it. Now as heaven, or the perfect enjoyment of God in a future world, is the great object upon which the heart of every Christian is supremely fixed, it is evident that if he has not obtained and does not enjoy the full assurance of hope, he will experience a distressing fear of finally coming short of it. Nor is this fear altogether sinful or unnecessary; on the contrary, it is of great importance in the christian life, as, when kept within due bounds, it excites the Christian to greater diligence and care, and leads him to work out his salvation with persevering earnestness. But the fear of which we now speak is different in its nature, and when cherished is productive of the worst effects. Arising from weakness of faith in the power and promises of God, it damps the Christian's ardour, slackens his diligence, and leads him to view heaven and eternal glory as unattainable by him. Under the influence of this principle he will be apt to express himself in some such language as the following:—  
“Earnestly do I desire to finish my course, and to attain unto the enjoyment of God in the celestial mansions for ever. But then, alas! I feel so much weakness and opposition, and am so often vanquished by my spiritual foes, that I fear I shall one day fall by the hand of some of them. When I consider what small progress I have hitherto been enabled to make, how closely my way is beset with snares, enemies, and dangers—how many temptations I have to resist, how many corruptions to subdue, how many painful steps to take, and how many arduous struggles to endure—how much watching, and vigour, and self-denial, are necessary, my mind is overpowered, and I fear that, like Israel of old, I shall fall in the wilderness, and never be permitted to enter the heavenly Canaan. Heaven is not to be reached by indolence

and inactivity. The gate which opens to it is strait, the way which leads to it is narrow, and of the great bulk of those who seem to be travelling towards it, few, few shall find it. Alas! I am afraid that, after all, when I come to enter upon an eternal world, when I come to cry, Lord open unto me, I shall hear that dreadful sentence, "depart from me, I never knew thee."

7th. The people of God are apt to be afraid of *death, judgment, and eternity*. These we join together, because they are closely connected, and the moment the first occurs, the others immediately succeed. Death is to all men a serious and important, to most men it is an awful and much dreaded event. In the immediate prospect of dissolution, there is something extremely amazing, something upon which reluctant nature cannot look unappalled. "When," says the fearful Christian, "I seriously consider death, and look upon this king of terrors in all his awful majesty; when I view his usual forerunners, pain, sickness, or lingering disease, when my body shall be consumed as a moth, when I shall be chastened with pain upon my bed, and the multitude of my bones with strong pain; when I consider him approaching me with unfeeling cruelty, cutting me off from the stage of life, the light of the world, the means of grace, and all the endearments of social intercourse; when I reflect upon his dissolving this frame by tearing asunder the two constituent parts of my nature, consigning my body to the dark and dreary grave, and sending away my soul to exist separate in unknown regions, and an unknown manner—when I seriously reflect upon these things, I tremble at the thought; and if it is so dreadful in prospect, how dreadful in reality! How shall I be able to enter the gloomy vale, to bid farewell to

life, to friends, and every earthly joy, to endure the agonizing throes of expiring nature, and all the terrors of my dying day! But this, though much, is only a part of my fear; 'tis only a part of the awful scene I see full before me. Were death only a departure from this world, a ceasing to exist in this frail, sinful, and imperfect state, methinks I could easily submit to it, and resign myself a willing subject to his dissolving power. But when I consider a judgment to come, when I reflect upon my appearing before the bar of a just, omniscient judge,—a judge who has seen and known all my actions, my most secret thoughts not excepted,—a judge who is just to condemn, and powerful to punish all his enemies, and who will by no means clear the guilty—when I consider this awful appearance and strict account, and that my eternal happiness or misery depends upon the decisive sentence, how awful the thought! How dreadful to appear when God is judge, and when conscious of guilt! How shall I stand before this impartial tribunal! How look my judge in the face! How hear the sentence pronounced that will fix my happiness or misery for ever! The smallest apprehension of being condemned—and, alas! I have too much reason to apprehend it—awakens a degree of horror, and fills my soul with dreadful consternation: so that I may well say with the Psalmist, cxix. 120—“ My flesh trembleth for fear of God, and of his righteous judgment my soul is much afraid.” Thus we have mentioned some of those things of which even the people of God are apt to be afraid, and we now proceed to the second division.

II. To consider the comfort which God suggests in our text to believers, and show how it is calculated to remove these fears. This comfort naturally



divides itself into three parts, each of which we shall endeavour very shortly to illustrate. The people of God, then, are to dismiss these fears. 1st. Because the Lord is their God. 2d. Because his gracious presence ever attends them, and, 3dly, because he will strengthen and support them with the right hand of his righteousness.

1st. They are not to be afraid, *for the Lord is their God.* By creation he is the God of nature and of all the children of men. But this, instead of being of any service to sinners, aggravates their guilt, and insures their misery: for concerning them he declares, he that made them will not have mercy upon them, and he that formed them will show them no favour. He is the God of his own people in a peculiar manner, and consequently is the source of their happiness and joy. Concerning them in love he has declared, “ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.” Astonishing declaration! Hearing this in the gospel, the people of God have been led, under the influence of the Spirit, to say, “the Lord is our portion, and we will hope in him continually.” Thus God in Christ becomes the Christian’s God, the object of his freest choice, his firmest trust, his supreme delight. The sincere language of his heart is, “whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon all the earth my soul desires besides thee.’ To thee, O my God, I devote the warmest love of my heart, and the entire and constant obedience of my life. While others trust in vanity, and place their affections upon objects which cannot satisfy, I will trust in the Lord my God; I will love him with all my heart, and fear and serve him all the days of my life.” In consequence of this, a new and spiritual relation takes place. He becomes the son and child of God through Jesus Christ; God becomes his God, for he is an

heir of God, and a joint heir with Jesus Christ. All the persons of the adorable Trinity, and all the perfections of the divine nature are engaged on his side, and pledged for his happiness. Unto him the Lord stands in every near and endearing relation; he is his father and his friend, so that all that he either is or has shall be enjoyed by him as his inheritance, or blessed to him for his benefit and advantage. The perfections of the divine nature look upon him with mild propitious aspect, declaring that they are engaged in his favour, and will be exerted for his happiness. The power of God, for instance, is the Christian's, to defend him; the wisdom of God is his, to counsel and direct him; the holiness of God is his, to sanctify and delight him; the justice of God is his, to secure his justification through the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ; the truth and veracity of God are his, to fulfil all the great and precious promises which he has made; the fullness of God is his, to supply all his returning wants; his mercy to pardon his sins, and his immutability and eternity to secure the continuance of his happiness and the perpetuity of his bliss. Having God in Christ, he has all things, for all things are his. The earth is his, to support him; the word is his, to instruct and quicken him; ordinances are his, to comfort and to refresh him; ministers are his, to edify and instruct him; providence is his, to make all things work together for his good; life is his, to do service unto God, and to finish his work upon earth; death is his, to deliver him from a body of sin and death; and heaven and the glories of immortality are his fair and unfading inheritance, to crown his labours, and to complete his joy. This, nay, more than this, more than we can express or conceive, is included in having God for our God. Is this God then—omnipotent, all-

sufficient, and gracious—the true Christian’s God? Why then should he be afraid? Nay, rather, why should he not triumph and exult? Afraid he should be, will be, lest he should offend him; but while under his protection, and enjoying his favour, he should banish every sinful and servile fear. He should say with an Apostle, “if God be for me and be my God, who or what can be against me?” “Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and what should discourage thee? Still trust in God, for I shall yet praise him; for he is the health of my countenance and my God.” This was the source of comfort to David in the day of his distress, and may be the spring of consolation and enjoyment to every real Christian. David was greatly distressed, but he encouraged himself in the Lord his God. Let all the children of Zion be joyful in their God and King. Rising above fear, let them adopt the sublime language of an ancient Prophet, Hab. iii. 17, 18—“Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

2d. The people of God are not to be afraid, *because his gracious presence ever attends them.* “Fear not, for I am with you;” I am your God at hand, and not afar off. I surround you with my presence, and will keep you from evil. God indeed is every where present; he fills all persons and places; pervades universal space, and is with all the creatures and things which he has made. Struck with this amazing truth, the Psalmist exclaims, Ps. cxxxix. 7 and 8—“Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy



presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." But this presence of God, necessary to the existence and support of all things, is no source of comfort and consolation to the vicious and ungodly; on the contrary, it is an object of terror, which they endeavour to banish from their minds, for they cannot bear the reflection of a God present to observe, and just to punish them for their sins. But the gracious presence of God unknown, and not desired by the wicked, is known and prized by all who love his name. To them it is vouchsafed, and by them enjoyed as their privilege and comfort. Of this they are never entirely deprived, for God continually surrounds them with his favour, protects them by his providence, guides them by his counsel, and follows them with his love. "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth, even for ever." How gracious and condescending in God to assure his people of this, and how may the assurance banish their fears, and inspire them with confidence and joy! If even in this world the presence of a faithful and powerful friend relieves the timid heart, and inspires us with confidence and hope, how much more may the gracious presence of the Almighty, a friend who sticketh closer than a brother, and who is ready and able to help us in every time of need! This gracious presence has attended the people of God in every age, and in every situation, and has wrought for them the most wonderful deliverances. It was with Jacob on his journey, and guided him in the way; it was with Joseph in the prison, and gave him favour

with the keeper and the king ; it was with David in his persecution, and preserved him from the cruelty of Saul ; it was with Daniel in the den, and shut the mouths of the lions ; it was with the children in the furnace, and preserved them from the fury of the fire ; it was with the apostles in the prison, and converted it into a palace ; it was with John in Patmos, and made that desert island blossom as a rose ; and it was with all the primitive martyrs, comforted them under their severest sufferings, led them to welcome the stake, to sing in the flames, and to rejoice in the prospect of eternal glory. And this same gracious presence, which attended believers in such a remarkable manner upon former occasions, will attend real Christians still ; for God is still the same gracious and merciful God, faithful to his promises, and unchangeable in his love, and will by no means forsake those who love and obey him. His presence shall attend them during their sojourning on earth, and will never leave them until they are brought to heaven, the place of his immediate glorious presence, where they shall see his face in righteousness, and be satisfied with his likeness for evermore. And is not this sufficient to comfort the sorrowful, and to animate the fearful Christian ? May not this impart firmness to his mind, and confidence to his heart ? May it not raise him above the slavish fear of any, of all his enemies, even of his last enemy, death, and enable him to triumph over their power ? Hear how the faith of this supported David in his distress, and even in the immediate view of dissolution, Ps. xxiii. 4, “ Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil : for thou art with me ; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” Concerning the people of God, then, we may say, as Balaam said

of Israel, Num. xxiii. 21, "The Lord their God is with them, and the shout of a king is among them." In their way to the heavenly Canaan, they walk as under a rich, refreshing canopy, having omniscience for their guide, and omnipotence for their guardian; for the Lord of hosts is with them, the God of Jacob is their refuge, according to that comfortable and comprehensive promise, Lev. xxvi. 11, 12, "I will set my tabernacle among them, and my soul shall not abhor them. And I will walk among them, and will be their God, and they shall be my people."

3d. The people of God need not entertain sinful or desponding fears, *because the Lord will strengthen and support them.* 'This is expressed by a variety of phrases in our text, all nearly conveying the same idea, and all tending to give Christians the fullest assurance of support. "I will strengthen thee, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee by the right hand of my righteousness." This, then, enlarges the former ideas, and perfects the whole. A friend in this world may be with us in time of danger and distress, and yet from fear, from weakness, or want of resolution, he may not be able to afford us that assistance which we need, or that support which we require. Indeed, the presence of a friend, though tender and soothing, is often unavailing; he can only sympathize with us in suffering, and many are the troubles we have to bear, which he can neither alleviate nor remove. But as God is his people's God, and his gracious presence ever attends them, so his love will induce him to impart that support which his knowledge sees they need, and his power is able to bestow. They can never be in such a situation that God will be unable to help and deliver them. His grace is always sufficient for them, and shall assuredly



be communicated in the time of need; for the Lord never beholds his people struggling with sorrows, or ready to be overcome with trials, without appearing seasonably in their favour, and vouchsafing them suitable support. As his eye is continually upon them, so his ear is open to their cry, and his hand, his righteous and omnipotent hand, is ready to be stretched out for their protection and relief. Like a skilful physician, he knows the cordials which will prove comfortable and strengthening to them, and knowing these, he will administer them with tenderness and care. By these they are revived and strengthened, and enabled to go on their way rejoicing; for as we depend upon the bounties of heaven and the blessing of God for the continuance and increase of our natural strength, so, as Christians, we equally depend upon the communications of the divine grace and Spirit for the continuance and restoration of our spiritual strength; for "without God we can do nothing." This the word of God, and the experience of his people, abundantly confirm, Zech. x. 12, "I will strengthen them in the Lord; and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the Lord." Paul, from his own experience, acknowledges this with gratitude and joy, 2 Tim. iv. 16, 17, "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me, and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." By this grace and support Christians acquire a kind of omnipotency; "For I can do all things," says Paul, "through Christ strengthening me." By this, difficult duties become easy, and painful ones pleasant. By this, strong temptations are easily overcome, and strong corruptions easily subdued. By this, heavy and long-continued trials are borne with patience and

silent submission. By this, Christians are carried through every difficulty, and armed against the terrors of death. With the assurance of such support, why should the people of God indulge desponding and melancholy fears? Has he not hitherto supported them, and will he not continue to support them? "According to their day, so shall their strength be." Let Christians, then, wait upon the Lord, and they "shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary, they shall walk, and not faint." Depending upon this gracious aid, let the weak say, they are strong; for if the grace of God can strengthen them, and his power uphold them, they shall not finally fall, but shall be kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation. Be not, therefore, too anxious, Christians, what ye shall do upon such an occasion, how ye shall bear such a trial, or face such an enemy. Trust in the Lord, and "his grace shall be made sufficient for you, his strength shall be perfected in your weakness," and at the last you shall conquer and triumph. To all the people of God, then, we may, with the greatest propriety, apply that sublime description originally addressed by Moses to Israel, Deut. xxxiii. 29, "Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places."

## IMPROVEMENT.

1st. From what has been said, you may see that even real Christians do not enjoy in this world undisturbed peace. No: by faith they enter into rest, and have a tranquillity of mind to which the

wicked and ungodly are utter strangers. Yet this is often interrupted: without may be fightings, and within may be fears. While they are in a world lying in wickedness, while they are exposed to the temptations of the adversary, while they are weighed down by a body of sin and death, they shall never enjoy perfect peace or undisturbed repose; but shall be meeting with many things to convince them that this is not their rest, because it is polluted. Let such, then, as indulge in false peace—as experience no changes in their frame, but are walking on, fearless, to the eternal world, examine into the grounds of this peace, that they may not be deceived in a matter of everlasting importance, and have to lament their folly when it is too late; for “there is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked.”

2d. From what has been said, you may see whence the fears of the people of God in this world originate. They arise from the darkness of their minds, the weakness of their faith, and the inconstancy of their obedience. Were their minds completely enlightened in the knowledge of God and divine things, their faith strong like that of the father of the faithful, and did they walk with God as Enoch, their sinful slavish fears would be dispelled, and, like the baptized eunuch, they would go on their way rejoicing. Persuaded of the power and presence of the Lord, of the faithfulness of his promises, of the merit of his death, and the efficacy of his grace and Spirit, they would rejoice in him all the day, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.

3d. From this subject you may also see, that all those who would wish to enjoy much peace and comfort, and to be freed from desponding fears, must be careful to guard against all sin, and to



keep themselves from their iniquity. Though the sins of believers are forgiven, yet, to enjoy a comfortable sense of this forgiveness, they must study to keep themselves pure, and to avoid every false and wicked way. The habitual sins of the ungodly destroy the foundation of solid hope in God—the occasional and not allowed sins of real Christians shake this hope, and therefore the most holy and watchful Christian generally enjoys the highest degree of peace and comfort, and is the greatest stranger to those fears which we formerly described. Peace and purity are, by the constitution of God, inseparably connected. “Great peace,” says the prophet, “have they who love thy law; and nothing shall offend them;”—“the fruit of righteousness is peace, and the effect of it is quietness and assurance for ever.”

4th. From what has been said, you may see the dignity and happiness of the people of God. The saints are the only excellent ones of the earth; they only taste real happiness here below. Though poor, they are rich—though despised, they are honourable—though having nothing, they possess all things. They are the salt of the earth, the light of the world, beloved of angels, and the jewels of the Lord. Though ignoble in their extraction, they are kings and priests unto God; and though they may be deemed mean-spirited and contemptible in life, they are the only persons on earth who possess true dignity, and are ambitious of true exaltation; for they are possessed of the Spirit of God, and they bound their desires by nothing short of the complete enjoyment of himself. While here they are nobly attended; angels minister unto them, and God himself condescends not only to come under their lowly roof, but to

come into their humble hearts and take up his abode with them. And what must be the happiness that arises from this inhabitation? Next to the happiness of dwelling with God, is the happiness of having God dwelling with us, and being our God: well, therefore, might the Psalmist say, Ps. cxliv. 15, “yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord.”

5th. This subject may also comfort believing communicants under the prospect of all that is before them.\* In the view of going again into the world and encountering its cares, temptations, and trials—in the view of suffering and distress—are your hearts apt to be overwhelmed, and do you feel the rising of sinful fear? Fear not, believers; you are indeed going into the world, and in the world ye shall have tribulation. But you go not alone; you shall not go unsupported. The Lord shall be with you, and being with you, he shall strengthen and support you. Take this promise in your hand as your pilgrim’s staff: it is a staff which has been tried, and shall not disappoint you. Walk with it through life, and even in death do not resign it. Approach with it Jordan’s stream—the stream shall divide, and you shall enter the heavenly Canaan, where you shall lay down the pilgrim’s staff, and put on the conqueror’s crown,—a crown of life which shall continue to shine with increasing brightness, without a pause and without a period.

6th, and lastly. This subject is also pregnant with terror to all who know not God, and who obey not the gospel of his grace. We have hitherto addressed ourselves to the people of God; and

\* This Discourse was delivered on the evening of a Sacramental Sabbath.

would to God that all in this numerous assembly were of this character ! But, as the most extensive charity forbids this thought, with faithfulness and affection we must now address ourselves to his enemies—to those who despise his grace, and defy his power. And to such we say, and say it solemnly, that this subject which we have been illustrating, and which is so comfortable to the people of God, has no consolation or comfort unto them : on the contrary, it tacitly reproves them, and, would they listen to its voice, speaks to them the language of terror. Indeed, every promise in Sacred Scripture which is made to the believer, virtually includes in it a threatening to the sinner. The very sources whence the Christian derives his comforts are the very springs whence issue the sinner's misery. Grace received, for instance, is the saint's salvation ; grace despised, is the sinner's condemnation. Justice satisfied, acquits the believer ; justice demanding satisfaction, condemns the unbeliever. Faithfulness in God fulfils his promises to his people ; and the same perfection fulfils his threatenings to his enemies. As God is perfect and unchangeable, every sinner must repent or perish ; and, therefore, while the Lord is saying to his people, " fear not, for I am with you," he says to his enemies, " be horribly afraid, for I am your enemy." O that fearfulness would surprise and awaken every careless and hypocritical soul ! and O that they would listen to the voice of mercy yet addressing them—" let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Then shall you experience the truth and comfort of this passage, with which, as we began, so we shall now finish,



this discourse—"Fear thou not; for I am with thee; be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

### SERMON III.

#### TIMID DISCIPLES ENCOURAGED TO SEEK A CRUCIFIED SAVIOUR.

MATTHEW xxviii. 5.

“ Fear not ye : for I know that ye seek Jesus, who was crucified.”

IN the preceding chapter we have an interesting account of the painful sufferings and ignominious death which our Saviour endured in accomplishing our salvation and finishing the work his Father gave him to do. When he expired upon the cross, the frame of nature was moved, as with sympathy for its dying Lord. The veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom; the earth did quake; the rocks were rent; the sun, as ashamed, hid his face; and many of the bodies of the saints which slept in the dust arose. But our Saviour's humiliation did not terminate with his death; for as he died, so he was also buried. On the evening of that memorable day, we are informed, Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man and a counsellor, and who was also one of his disciples, asked and obtained of Pilate the body of Jesus, which he wrapped in a linen cloth, laid in his own new tomb, which had been hewn out of the rock, and, after rolling a large stone to the door of the sepulchre, he departed. Upon this the chief priests and Pharisees, recollecting that our Saviour, during his life, had declared that he would rise the third day, applied unto Pilate, and having received authority from him, sealed the stone, and set a watch of Roman soldiers over the sepulchre,

to prevent the body from being removed by his disciples. Unto the dust of death the Saviour was now brought, and remained for some time a prisoner in the tomb. But it was not possible that the Prince of life should be held of death; for, as he had power to lay down his life, so, having satisfied the demands of law and justice, he had power to take it again. Accordingly, in the beginning of this chapter we have an account of his resurrection, and of the miraculous circumstances which attended that glorious event. "In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great earthquake; for, behold, the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow; and for fear of him the keepers did shake and became as dead men." If such an effect was produced upon a military guard—upon men accustomed to scenes of danger—we may well suppose that the women would be filled with the greatest consternation. The angel, however, who came to announce the resurrection of our Lord, while he left the unbelieving guard to sink under their fears, revived the spirits of the pious females, by addressing them in the consolatory language of the text—"And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, who was crucified." These words may, with great propriety, be addressed to all timid believers who, though weak in faith, are seeking their crucified Saviour. Viewing them in this spiritual sense, we shall endeavour, in discoursing from them, in dependence on divine assistance,



I. To show you what is implied in timid Christians seeking Jesus, who was crucified.

II. To mention some of the fears with which those who seek him may be oppressed.

III. To offer a few directions to such as profess to seek him.

I. We will endeavour to show what is implied in timid believers seeking Jesus, who was crucified.

1st. It evidently supposes *some previous knowledge of him, and acquaintance with him*. This is evident from the character of the women mentioned in this passage. They did not come to the sepulchre in order to commence acquaintance with Jesus. This was happily begun before, during his residence among them, when they frequently conversed with him, beheld his glory, and were favoured with the endearments of his presence and love. The same truth is, also, evident from the nature of things; for an object unknown can never be esteemed, and, if not esteemed, cannot be pursued with constancy and care. There was a period, indeed, when those who now seek Jesus, like a blind unbelieving world, were entirely ignorant of him. They knew him not in his person, offices, and grace, and had no desire of connection with him. To them he appeared to have no form or comeliness; they saw no beauty in him why he should be desired—no benefit to be derived from him. They were ignorant of his divine and mediatorial excellences; for the god of this world blinded their minds, lest the light of the glorious gospel of the Son of God should shine into them. But now a happy revolution has taken place in their views. The eyes of their understandings are opened, and “they who were once darkness, are now light in the Lord.”

“ God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shone into their minds, to give them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.” Being the happy subjects of enlightening grace, they are made acquainted with the person and propitiation, with the character and offices of Jesus Christ. They know that he is the Christ, the Son of the living God, uniting in his person the glories of divinity and the beauties of holy humanity—possessed of every excellence that can attract the attention, or engage the esteem of the sons of men. They know that, as our Redeemer, he fulfilled the law, in the place of his people, and made complete atonement for their sins, by giving himself an offering and a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour. They know that salvation is to be found in him, and in no other ; for “ there is no other name given under heaven, among men, by which we must be saved.” They know that he is the pearl of great price, for obtaining which they are now willing to part with all. This knowledge induces them earnestly to seek Jesus who was crucified. It is owing to the want of this knowledge that the wicked and ungodly despise and reject him. The rude savage who knows not the value of gold despises it, but the enlightened European who knows its value appreciates it, and seeks to obtain it. In like manner, the person who knows not Jesus will always despise him, while those who discern his infinite excellence and amiableness, will highly esteem him, and seek him with their whole hearts. Beholding his transcendent glory, their hearts will be delighted with the discovery ;—every inferior object will be dismissed, every meaner pursuit abandoned, and, captivated with his transcendent worth, they will exclaim with the Apostle, Phil. iii. 7, 8, “ What

things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ."

2d. To seek Jesus who was crucified, implies *an ardent desire to see and enjoy him*. There is nothing that more directly tends to ascertain a person's state and character, than the desires and inclinations he habitually feels and discovers: for, as the running of water shows the declivity of the ground, so the current of the desires and affections shows the temper and character of the person in whom they reside. Those who seek Jesus, therefore, will love him with a supreme affection, and rejoice in his fellowship and favour. The desires of their souls will be constantly towards him, and the remembrance of his grace and name: nor will any circumstances in which they may be placed change the current of their affections, or damp their ardour in seeking him whom they love. This strong desire to see and to enjoy the Lord appeared in the conduct of the women mentioned in the context. Jesus, crucified and laid in the grave, was still precious in their admiring view. Even then their hearts burned with affection towards him, and, under the influence of this principle, they came to the sepulchre seeking the Lord. Had they not known and loved him during life, when laid in the grave he would soon have been forgotten, or, if remembered, they would have sought him no more. But behold their strong affection prevents the dawning of the day, and, prompted by ardent desire, they come to the sepulchre seeking Jesus who was crucified. And will not the same desire, so conspicuous in the conduct of these pious women, like-



wise appear in the character and conduct of all those who seek the Lord? As desire is love in motion, so, wherever Jesus is known and esteemed, this knowledge will not remain dormant or inactive, but discover itself in incessant longings, which nothing short of actual enjoyment can satisfy. The person, therefore, who does not feel this ardent desire after Christ—whose soul does not desire him in the night, and whose spirit within him does not seek him early, can have no claim to the character and exercise which our text describes. You are, at same time, to observe that every desire, however faint and languid, is not characteristic of the seekers of Jesus. Your love to him must be supreme, or you do not love him at all; and your desires after him must be vigorous and active, if they are the desires of the children of God. Hence they are described in Scripture by the strongest feelings of our nature—by appetites which nothing but the enjoyment of a suitable object can satisfy. Can the hungry man be satisfied with any thing but food? or the thirsty with any thing but a refreshing draught? and can they who pant after God, as the thirsty hart panteth after the water-brooks, be satisfied with any thing short of the enjoyment of the object of their extreme regard? It was this desire which dictated the sentiment of the Psalmist, Ps. lxxiii. 25, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.” The same desire gave occasion to the petition of the spouse, Song viii. 6, “Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.” If you are seeking Jesus, your hearts will burn with ardent and strong desires after him, and you will adopt the language of the Greeks who

came to Philip, saying, "Sir, we would see Jesus." Jesus, to your enlightened minds, will appear infinitely amiable. He will be all your salvation and all your desire. Even in his lowest state of abasement, whether on the cross or in the grave, he will be admired by you. Far from being ashamed of a crucified Saviour, you will glory in his cross. You will account it an honour to be called by his name, and cheerfully embrace every opportunity of paying respect to his memory, or remembering his dying love. Jesus will reign unrivalled in your hearts, and your lips and lives will speak his praise. To see and to enjoy him will be your heaven upon earth, and to behold his face in righteousness will be heaven itself, when your desires shall be completely satisfied.

3d. To seek Jesus also implies *a devout and regular waiting upon him in every ordinance of divine institution*. As Christians have obtained some knowledge of Christ, and feel the strongest desires after him, so they will employ every appointed mean in order to find him whom they love and esteem. Is there any place where he condescends to dwell, or any institution in which he promises to meet with his people and to bless them? To this place they will repair, and upon this ordinance they will uniformly attend. Even the enemies of Jesus, when they wished to apprehend him, sought him in the place to which he usually resorted; and when the friends of Jesus desire to find him, they must seek him in the ordinances of his own appointment. They will seek him in their closets by pious meditation and fervent prayer. They will seek him in searching the Sacred Scriptures, which, like a mirror, reflect his excellence, and testify of him. They will seek him in his sanctuary, in attending public wor-

ship, and especially in the sacrament of the Supper, and at his own table, where he comes unto his people and sups with them, and they with him. At same time, it must be observed that ordinances, without the presence of Christ, will not satisfy those who seek the Lord. To those, indeed, who content themselves with a form of godliness, they may afford a temporary satisfaction ; but to such as really seek Jesus who was crucified, they are only valued as means of spiritual enjoyment. They employ these ordinances as Zaccheus did the tree, as proper means for seeing the Lord. Without Christ, however, on whom their glory and usefulness depend, they are unsatisfactory ; for as soon may a vessel that is empty satisfy the hungry, as ordinances without the presence and enjoyment of Christ please the soul that sincerely seeks him. Such a character, in waiting upon ordinances, will have his heart fixed upon Jesus Christ. “ O my soul !” will he say, “ wait thou *only* upon God ; for my expectation is from him. How amiable are thy tabernacles ! how lovely is thy dwelling-place ! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord ; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after, that all days of my life I may dwell in the house of the Lord, to behold his beauty, and to enquire in his temple.” In waiting upon ordinances, therefore, he will pray with the Psalmist—“ O send forth thy light and thy truth : let them lead me, let them bring me unto thy holy hill, where thy dwellings are. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God, my God, my exceeding joy.”

4th. To seek Jesus also implies *that we persevere in the pursuit, notwithstanding of every discouragement.* All who are acquainted with the



nature of the christian life know that believers meet with much opposition in their christian course. No sooner, indeed, do they turn their faces Zionward, and begin to seek the Lord, than they draw upon themselves the malice and opposition of powerful enemies. The world and the wicked one unite their endeavours to ensnare and to destroy them. They throw every possible obstacle in their way, and do not allow them to advance with ease, or without molestation. Their sky is, therefore, often overcast, their road rough and rugged, and darkness covers their path. Nay, opposition sometimes arises from a quarter least expected—from our own friends and connections; for the Christian finds the truth of our Saviour's declaration, that "a man's enemies are sometimes those of his own household." Thus the Christian has to struggle with the opposition of the world and the wicked one, as well as with the secret workings of corruption and unbelief in his own heart. Without are fightings, and within are fears. These discouragements induce many, who once seemed to seek the Lord, to desert him; for, when persecution or affliction because of the word ariseth, by and bye they are offended. But although this opposition is felt and lamented by such as seek the Lord, yet they are enabled to resist and overcome it. They continue firm to their purpose, and steady in their course, and will not desert the path of duty, though it should be solitary and unfrequented. It is not the ridicule and opposition of the world; it is not the suggestions of false friends; it is not the loss of character and reputation with the world; nor even strong temptations held out to seduce them, and to engage them to desert their well-chosen path, that will be able to induce them to stop short in their christian course,

or, like the Jews, to walk no more with Jesus. On the contrary, they know that these discouragements were to be expected, and that this opposition has been encountered and overcome by all who have gone before them; for all who will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution. The cross is still the way to the crown; and through the wilderness the Israelite indeed must travel into the promised land. A conflict must be endured before victory can be obtained, and it is through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom. Instead, therefore, of being offended at the cross, the Christian will cheerfully take it up when in his way, and bear it after Christ, who endured a much heavier cross for him than he can be loaded with. While he is struggling with discouragement and opposition in seeking the Lord, and enabled to overcome them, he will console himself with the animating prospect of approaching to him with freedom, and without opposition, when no corruption shall be felt from within, no enemy shall assail from without, nor anything be permitted to annoy the celestial worshipper for evermore.

5th. Seeking Jesus implies, also, *some hope of finding him, and receiving spiritual blessings from him.* This is encouraged by the precious promise, "seek and ye shall find." Though Jesus will be desired principally on account of his own intrinsic excellence, yet it is obvious he will also be sought after by his people, upon account of the benefits to be received from him. It is in this view, perhaps, that he at first attracts the attention of the guilty and condemned. It is his priestly character which inspires them with joy and confidence, and it is the hope of pardon through his blood, and salvation through his perfect and accepted righteousness, that engages poor and perish-

ing souls to seek unto him. This is evident, not only from the experience of those who have come to Christ, but likewise from the express declarations of Scripture. It is redemption through the blood of Christ that induces sinners at first to seek to the Saviour, and the expectation of receiving spiritual blessings from his hand that engages them constantly to wait upon him. Nor let any imagine that the Christian must on this account be mercenary in his views, or suppose that he can merit these blessings, by seeking them, any more than the mendicant can merit the alms which he humbly solicits. At same time, being convinced that he needs these blessings, and that they are to be found only in Christ, he comes to him asking and desiring to receive them, and to have his necessities supplied according to his riches in glory by Jesus Christ. In this view his expectations cannot rise too high ; for it hath pleased the Father that in Christ Jesus all fulness should dwell, that out of it his people might receive, and grace for grace. Unto Jesus, therefore, all his people seek for pardon and peace, for righteousness and strength, for victory over their enemies at present, and glory when their warfare shall be accomplished. Convinced that happiness is to be obtained only in him, and that they who find him find *life*, and obtain favour from the Lord, they seek unto him as their only Saviour, expecting to receive from him the blessings of grace in time, and a crown of glory that fadeth not away when time shall be no more. We now proceed

II. To mention some of the fears with which those who seek Jesus may be oppressed, and to endeavour to remove them.

1st. Persons of this character are apt to experi-



ence fear, *arising from a sense of their extreme unworthiness*. Every real Christian is sensible of his unworthiness: he is conscious, that as a creature he stands at an infinite natural distance from God, and that as a sinner he is removed to an infinite moral distance from him, and is altogether unworthy of his notice or regard. He is persuaded that a more undeserving creature than himself does not exist upon the face of the earth, that he is the chief of sinners, and less than the least of all saints. He is astonished that he has been spared so long, that he is permitted to breathe the vital air, and to enjoy the boun-<sup>\*</sup>ties of an indulgent providence, while he is less than the least of all God's mercies. Though this sense of his own meanness is highly proper, yet it sometimes discourages him in his approaches to God, and induces him to imagine that it must be presumption to expect any favour from the hand of God. He is confounded in the divine presence, and is afraid that his unworthiness will deprive him of a gracious reception. Thus it discovers itself to be the remains of a proud and legal spirit, and indicates that the person could wish to be possessed of something to recommend him to Christ, or to deserve his notice and regard. But where are such qualifications to be found? Does God humble himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and is it anything but infinite condescension when he deigns to regard sinful creatures upon this earth? Is not grace the only plea we can urge before God, and does not this in its nature exclude all merit? However unworthy, therefore, you may be in yourself, let not a sense of this discourage you or make you afraid to seek the Lord. None ever receive more favour from him than those who come with the deepest sense of their unworthiness, of which the penitent publican

and the woman of Canaan are recorded instances. He who knows all things knows you are unworthy of the least crumb that falls from the children's table, and yet he is ready to bestow upon you the children's bread. Arise, then, and come. He calleth you, saying, "He that hath no money let him come, and buy wine and milk, without money and without price : let him come and take of the water of life freely, for he feedeth the hungry with good things, while the rich he sends empty away."

2d. Those who seek Jesus may experience fear *arising from a sense of their criminal backsliding*. Though real Christians shall persevere in a state of grace, yet they are liable to partial apostacy, for there is in them an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. From remaining corruption or sudden temptation they may fall into sin or become remiss in duty to the wounding of their consciences, the sorrow of the serious, the grieving of the Spirit, and the loss of spiritual peace. Thus the things which remain with them may languish and be ready to die. But although the Lord may permit his people to depart from him for a season, he will not allow them to backslide with a *perpetual backsliding*. He will hedge up their way with thorns, so that they shall not find their pleasure : he will rouse their consciences, and cause them to return unto himself. When Christians are awakened to a sense of their sin, and of their ungrateful departure from the Lord, what shame, and sorrow, and fear, will fill their hearts ? Are they not sometimes ready to suppose that they have so far apostatized from God, that it is in vain for them to think of a return, and that pardon will not be extended to such ungrateful backsliders as they have been ? Now, although the sins of backsliding believers are attended with peculiar aggravations,

and ought therefore to be humbly confessed and deeply lamented, yet still they ought not to despond or despair, for there is mercy with God that he may be feared, there is plenteous redemption that he may be sought unto. To a speedy return unto the Lord they may be encouraged by his own gracious invitation, Jer. iii. 12, 14, "Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am married unto you, saith the Lord." Let the trembling backslider listen to the voice of mercy, inviting him to return, and even dictating a penitential confession, Hos. xiv. 1, 2, "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips." Let those who seek Jesus be humbled under a sense of their former backslidings; but let them not despond or despair. The Lord rejoices to see his children returning to him, and, like the father in the parable, he will meet them with love in his heart and a pardon in his hand, saying, Hos. xiv. 4, "I will heal your backsliding, I will love you freely: for mine anger is turned away from you."

3d. Those who seek Jesus may experience fear, *arising from the dead distracted frame in which they are when about to engage in the most solemn duties of religion.* In every Christian there are two opposite contending principles—the flesh and the spirit, the new man and the old. These maintain a constant opposition to one another, and render the christian life one uninterrupted struggle. Though the principle of corruption is still at work, yet its operation is most sensibly felt when the



Christian is to engage in any religious duty. Whenever he would do good, then evil is present with him. When he wishes to be spiritual, and lively in his religious exercises, then a body of sin like a dead weight weighs down his aspiring soul, and quenches the rising flame. This leads him frequently to exclaim with the Apostle, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The adversary of salvation, too, combines with a corrupt heart to distract the minds of those who seek the Lord. As he threw down and tare the young man, when coming to Christ, so he still endeavours to distress, if he cannot destroy, all those who sincerely seek him. This is the source of much uneasiness and fear unto all who are exercised unto godliness. They are afraid to wait upon the Lord, when their minds are disordered, or divided, and could even sometimes wish to decline duty because they do not find themselves in a comfortable or devotional frame. They forget, however, that the Lord knows their frame, that he promises them the aid of the Spirit, and that their acceptance with him in duty depends, not upon their feelings or frames, but upon their union with Christ, and their simple dependance upon his merits and mediation. They forget that the preparation of the heart is from the Lord, and that the frames of his people depend upon the influence of his Holy Spirit. Are your hearts, then, cold and dead—your thoughts unfixed, and your feelings languid? He to whom you approach can soon loose your bonds. He can enliven your affections, fix your attention, and soften your hearts. He can inflame your love, and enlarge your desires, so that although just now you may be dull and languid, your souls shall become as the chariots of Aminadab. Let not those, then, who seek the Lord be afraid merely upon

account of the uncomfortable frame they may at present experience ; but let them pray to the Lord in the words of the spouse, Song iv. 16, “ Awake, O north wind ; and come, thou south ; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.”

4th. Those who seek Jesus may experience fear *arising from views of the majesty and greatness of the Lord, to whom they approach.* As Christians have more affecting views of the divine holiness and majesty than others, so they are apt to experience a fear to which the wicked and ungodly are utter strangers. Thus, when Isaiah in prophetic vision saw the glory of Christ, he exclaimed, “ woe is me ; for I am undone ; for I am a man of unclean lips ; and mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.” When the disciples beheld the glory of Christ as he was going up to Jerusalem, we are told that they followed him with fear ; and when Peter saw the miraculous display of his power, he said, “ depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man.” In like manner, when Christians reflect upon their impurity and guilt, and obtain affecting views of the glory and greatness of the Lord, to whom they approach in the sacrament of the Supper, they are apt to experience a slavish fear, and to draw nigh with terror, when they ought to come to him with joy, and hope, and trust. He is great indeed, and greatly to be feared, and to be had in reverence by all those that draw nigh unto him ; but he loves to see his people approaching him with the reverence and dignified freedom of sons, and not with the suspicion and the trembling of slaves. God, to whom we come in Christ, is great and gracious, holy and condescending, and we approach to him not upon mount

Sinai burning with fire and surrounded with darkness and tempest, but we come to mount Sion, to a throne of grace, and a God of mercy, Heb. iv. 15, 16, "for we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." The spirit of the gospel is not a spirit of fear, but of peace, and of love, and of a sound mind. Hence, says the Apostle, Rom. viii. 15, "for ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Zacharias, too, declares of the reign of Christ, Luke i. 74, 75, "that he would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." Let those who seek the Lord, therefore, dismiss their slavish dread, and cultivate a filial fear; and while he is saying unto them, "seek ye my face," let their hearts reply, "thy face, O Lord, for ever will we seek." We now proceed,

III. To give a few directions to such as profess to seek the Lord. And here,

1st. Attend to the principles on which you proceed, and the motives by which you are actuated, in professing to seek the Lord. Be sincere and upright in your views and aims. God, we are certain, who knows the heart, principally regards it in all those who draw nigh unto him. He takes notice of the motives by which they are influenced, and the principles upon which they proceed. If our hearts, therefore, are not right with him, all must be wrong, and our external religious conduct, in-



stead of being accepted, must be highly displeasing in his sight. Hear how he complains of his ancient people; and may not the same complaint be made of many professing Christians? “This people draw near to me with their mouth, and do honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.” If you profess to seek him while you have some other object in view—while you are consulting your own character and credit in the world, and merely conforming to a decent custom which our ancestors have observed and time has rendered venerable, your profession is vain and your conduct reprehensible. You insult the omniscience of that God to whom you approach, and hypocritically say, by your outward conduct, that you are seeking him, while your hearts are going after your covetousness. Be careful, then, to examine the principles upon which you proceed in your religious conduct, and the motives by which you are influenced in waiting upon God; for, as an error in the foundation may ruin the superstructure, or as bitterness in the fountain must communicate itself to the stream, so unworthy motives and improper principles will vitiate and debase the fairest external religious conduct. That question which Christ proposed to those who came out to apprehend him, “whom seek ye?” is a question which all of us ought to put to ourselves when we profess to seek the Lord. In our religious exercises, let us be sincere, sound, upright, and earnest. Let us act from a real and supreme love to Jesus—from a regard to his authority, and a view to his glory. Let us come to ordinances, desiring to see and to enjoy him, saying, Ps. xxvii. 4, “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty

of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple." A little of this godly sincerity is more acceptable in the sight of Heaven than the most specious and splendid appearances without it. Ps. cv. 4—"Seek the Lord," therefore, "and his strength; seek his face evermore."

2d. Another direction we would give, is to *seek him with the greatest diligence and ardour*. Deut. iv. 29—"If thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him; if thou shalt seek him with all thine heart, and with all thy soul." Diligence is so necessary in every laudable pursuit, that nothing great or excellent can be accomplished without it. What industry and exertion do the men of the world discover in pursuing their favourite objects! Nothing can exceed the attention which they give, the prudence they discover, and the assiduity they employ. All of them are fleeing from poverty as the greatest evil, and pursuing after wealth as the greatest good. And shall such exertions be made in seeking the riches or honours of this life, and no diligence be discovered in seeking the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof? As the object in the one case is infinitely more excellent than in the other, so it ought to be sought after with a proportionable diligence and care. And yet what coldness and languor do many discover in seeking the Lord? They manifest so little diligence in the use of means, as might tempt even a charitable observer to suspect that they are indifferent about finding him, or receiving any benefit from his hand. Let not the careless, however, expect to receive any thing from the Lord, for it is the hand of the diligent that maketh rich. Let all those who profess to seek Jesus, then, do it with all their heart. Let them give all diligence to be found of him in peace, and to work out their

salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that it is God that worketh in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Let them seek for him as for hid treasure, and they shall find him, according to that gracious promise, Prov. ii. 4, 5, "If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." Faint wishes and feeble endeavours will be of no avail; for "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Strive, then, to enter in at the strait gate; for "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

The 3d and last direction we shall give is, *seek him with constancy*. Hos. vi. 3—"Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord, that his going forth is prepared as the morning." The christian life is constant and persevering, and to its various duties a uniform attention must be paid. Instead of slackening in his diligence, the Christian must hold on his way, and endeavour, by waiting upon the Lord, to grow stronger and stronger. His goodness must not resemble the morning cloud or the early dew which passeth away; but his path must be as the morning light, shining more and more unto the perfect day. His attention to duty is not to be confined to times and places, but at all times and in all situations he is to seek the Lord. Like Abraham, wherever he goes, he must erect an altar, and call upon the name of the Lord. He must seek him at home and abroad, in health and in sickness, in prosperity and in adversity. He must seek him not only when the Sabbath or the sacrament returns, but every day, and upon every occasion. Many professors have the greatest need to pay attention to this direction, as it seems to be



little regarded by them. Their religion is of a temporary and transient kind; it comes with the occasion, and with the occasion it departs. In the time of personal or domestic affliction, when they have death and judgment before them, they will pray to God and discover some concern about salvation; or when the sacrament is to be dispensed, for a few days before or after the solemnity they may discover more than ordinary seriousness. But, alas! they soon relapse into their former carelessness, or do not persevere in their attention to duty. If you wish, however, to seek the Lord, you must be steady and persevering; you must continue unto the end, that you may be saved. You should also learn to wait patiently upon God, and not in your unbelieving haste to imagine that because you have not yet found him whom your souls love, therefore it is in vain for you to wait any longer. The Lord is a God of judgment, and blessed are all they that wait for him. Had Israel waited only one day longer for the descent of Moses from the mount, they would not have fallen into the sin of idolatry; or had the impotent man waited at the pool of Bethesda but one day less, he would not in all probability have met with Christ, or received a cure. Continue then to seek the Lord; wait patiently upon him, and do not fret, and you may rest assured that though the vision may be for an appointed time, it is your duty to wait for it, because it will surely come, and will not tarry. Blessed are all they that wait for him. Endeavour then to say with the Church, Is. viii. 17, "I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him." It only remains that we conclude with the application of what hath been said.

And, 1st, from what hath been said, you may

be persuaded to examine yourselves, whether or not you really seek Jesus who was crucified, and consequently, whether or not you are prepared for sitting down at the table of the Lord. This is a duty necessary at all times, but especially in view of the solemn service before you. Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. In performing this duty, you may in some measure be assisted and directed by what hath been suggested in the former part of this discourse. Have you acquired a clear spiritual knowledge of the person, worth, and work of Jesus Christ, and does he appear to you to be the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely? Do you feel the strongest desire to see him, and to enjoy communion with him? And, prompted by this desire, are you induced to wait upon him in the ordinances of his appointment, and to persevere in the pursuit, notwithstanding of every discouragement? Expecting to receive from him spiritual and special blessings, are you regular in the performance of commanded duty, and do you wait for him more than they that watch for the morning? If this is your character and exercise, then we may say, Ps. xxiv. 6, "this is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob."

2d. From what hath been said, you may also see that there are few only of the great body of professing Christians who are really seeking Jesus. How many are so keen in seeking after this world, that they cannot seek after the next. Their constant cry is, who will show us any good? but they never say, Lord, lift upon us the light of thy countenance, for this will give us more joy than the men of the world ever felt, even when their corn and wine abounded. Christ's flock is but a little flock. Though many are called, few are chosen;

though many say unto Christ, Lord, Lord, yet few do the things which he hath commanded. When we look at the roads which lead to the eternal world, is not the broad way full, while the narrow one is almost empty? for "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Let us all, therefore, give diligence that we may be found amongst this happy few, and make our calling and election sure.

3d. From this subject you may also see, that while the omniscience of God is awful unto the wicked, it is comfortable unto real Christians who seek him. While the Lord knows the secret sins of the wicked, and their enmity against him, while he knows the deceit of the hypocrite's heart, the Lord also knows them that are his. He sees and knows the secret tendency of their souls towards him. He knows that they come, seeking Jesus who was crucified, and knowing this, he will meet them in mercy, for he will fulfil the desire of the humble, he will hear their cry, and save them.

4th. From what hath been said, you may see why so few professors find the Lord, or derive any benefit from instituted ordinances. If you inquire what is the reason, the only answer we can give is, that they do not seek him with their whole hearts. They are not diligent and regular in the use of appointed means, in reading, hearing, and attending upon ordinances; and when they do, they are not single and sincere in their views. They have some other end in view than to seek Jesus who was crucified. Now, if they bestow far more pains in seeking after any thing or every thing than in seeking Jesus, is it any wonder that they do not find him, especially since God has declared that we shall only find him when we shall seek him with our whole hearts?



5th. From this subject you may also see, that real Christians are the only men who are fired with a laudable ambition. Those who set their hearts upon the world, and are eagerly seeking its riches, pleasures, or honours, as their supreme good, are grovelling mean-spirited mortals, who do not consult the dignity of their natures, or the happiness of their souls. The Christian, on the contrary, born from above, and enlightened from on high, looks down upon them with a mixture of pity and contempt, and aspires after a portion which this world cannot give or take away. Rising above all that the world deems great or good, their ambitious souls seek no less a portion than Jesus and immortal glory! Risen with Christ, they have their affections set upon things that are above; their life is hid with Christ in God, and when he who is their life shall appear, then shall they appear with him in glory.

6th, and lastly. From what hath been said, you may see the final misery of all those who seek not Jesus who was crucified. Their misery is so great that it can neither be expressed nor conceived. They do not enjoy any solid or substantial happiness in time, and if they seek not Jesus, they shall enjoy none through eternity. In this world they are pursuing shadows which elude their grasp, and vanities which disappoint their expectation. And what is to be the end of this foolish pursuit? Were they only to look forward a little, they might perceive it. Stript by the hand of death of all that they now desire, their end must be sorrow, disappointment, and despair! Now they may despise the gospel, and slight the Saviour; but the day is coming, it is just at hand, when they will see their sin and folly, and would give the whole world if they had it, for an interest in Jesus whom they

now contemn. Then they may seek the Lord, but he will not be found; they may call upon him, but he will not be near. Then a gracious Saviour will be converted into an avenging judge, and his precious blood, which now speaks better things than the blood of Abel, shall then cry aloud for vengeance. Deplorable situation! But, blessed be God! it is not yet yours. The hope of the gospel is still set before you. Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation. We therefore conclude this discourse with the seasonable direction of the prophet, Is. lv. 6, "seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near;" with the encouraging promise, Am. v. 4, "seek ye the Lord, and ye shall live."

## SERMON IV.

### THE GOSPEL PRODUCTIVE OF GLORY TO GOD AND PEACE TO MAN.

LUKE ii. 14.

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

SUCH is the song of wonder and admiration sung by the heavenly hosts when, over the plains of Bethlehem, they celebrated the Saviour's birth. While some shepherds, according to the custom of their country, were employed in watching their flocks by night, “lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid.” Every preternatural appearance is an object of terror unto sinful men, and this fact of itself shows in the plainest manner that we are in a guilty and fallen state. This blessed messenger of God, however, soon removed their apprehensions by saying, “fear not; for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people: for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” But although this joyful event was announced only by one angel, it was soon to call forth the astonishment and praise of all the celestial hierarchy; and, accordingly, it follows in the words of the text, “and suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” These pure and benevolent spirits are here introduced as celebrating an



event in which we are all deeply interested,—an event which involves in it not the transient interests of a small and insignificant fraction of the human race, but the triumphs of redeeming love in the salvation of the sons of men. Such a subject must always be acceptable and pleasing unto real Christians, and it is one which carries us back to the counsels of peace, and forward to the consummation of all things—to the remotest periods of eternity. In farther discoursing from these words, the method which I propose, in reliance upon divine aid, to observe is,

I. To consider the scheme of our redemption through Jesus Christ, as originating in God's good will to men.

II. As proclaiming and producing peace upon earth.

III. As terminating in glory to God in the highest.

I shall then conclude with some application suited to the subject.

I. Let us consider the scheme of our redemption through Jesus Christ, *as originating in God's good will to men.* Although this is the particular mentioned last in our text, yet, according to the natural order of things, it falls first to be considered.

By the good will of God towards men, we are to understand his free favour, or sovereign love unto them in Christ Jesus. This love is absolutely free and sovereign in its nature, while it is saving in its effects. It springs from the pure benevolence of God, and is unpurchased and undeserved. That the redemption of mankind through Jesus Christ originates in the good will of God must appear, if

we consider the character of God in whose heart it arose, and of men who are the undeserving objects of it, as well as the express declarations of Sacred Scripture. When we turn our attention to the character of God, and begin to think of his nature and perfections, our minds are overpowered and bewildered, and we are forced to say, “who can by searching find out God, who can find out the Almighty to perfection?” By reason and revelation we are led to regard him as a being who is absolutely perfect and independent, who is sovereign in his nature, and who, therefore, does all things according to the counsel of his own will. Perfectly happy in himself, and altogether independent of his creatures, he can neither be compelled to act contrary to his nature and inclination, nor from any external motive be induced to change the purposes which he has formed. A sovereign in this world, through the solicitation of friends, or from political considerations, may be induced to show favour to some for whom he has no regard; but such things can never be ascribed unto God, who is independent of his creatures, and whose kingdom is not supported by the maxims of this world. He cannot act impelled by any motive arising from without himself, but is free and sovereign in the whole of his procedure. It is true, mercy is an essential attribute of his nature. But this perfection always acts in accordance with his other attributes—with his justice, holiness, and truth. Were God all mercy, no miserable creature would exist, or were he all justice, no sinful being would be spared for a moment; but these perfections, instead of counteracting or destroying each other, are exercised in perfect harmony with one another. While justice, however, demands the punishment of sin from God, as the righteous ruler of the universe, it is evident

that his mercy or love unto sinners through Christ Jesus, is free and sovereign, and springs from nothing but his own good will. This good will was not excited in the divine mind by the solicitation of the miserable, nor was it purchased by the sufferings and death of Christ; but it arose from his own self-moving love, and, like himself, derived its existence from no external source. This the perfection of the divine nature teaches us in the clearest manner, and to this conclusion we are necessarily led, when we think justly of the Supreme Being—of his character and conduct unto the sons of men. But not to insist upon this argument, we observed farther, that our redemption through Jesus Christ would appear to originate from the good will of God, if we considered the character and condition of men who are its undeserving objects. We learn from Scripture that angels as well as men were involved in guilt and misery. These beings of a superior nature, who existed before man was created upon the earth, had risen in rebellion against God, and were therefore banished from the abodes of happiness. Man too, after he was created, disobeyed the commandment of his Maker, and was excluded from the earthly paradise; and thus both angels and men were sunk in guilt and wretchedness. Now, as angels are beings of a higher order, and nearer unto God in the scale of existence than man, and as their superior powers render them capable of performing a more exalted service, it should naturally have occurred to us, that if good will were to be shown by God to any of his fallen creatures, it would have been manifested to fallen angels, as more worthy of his notice and deserving of his regard. But his thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways. He passed by angels; though creatures of a higher



order, he felt and discovered no good will unto them; on the contrary, he reserves them under chains of darkness until the judgment of the great day, while to men guilty and rebellious, and who justly deserved to suffer all the effects of the divine displeasure, he hath manifested his love in Christ Jesus. To what then is this to be ascribed, but to his own sovereign compassion and distinguishing grace, for there was nothing in man that could attract his notice, or merit his regard? On the other hand, there was every thing in them opposite to his nature, and that can be supposed to provoke his displeasure, and excite his aversion. Their guilt called upon divine justice to inflict merited and threatened punishment, and their moral impurity rendered them abominable in the eyes of his holiness. No remaining seeds of goodness were to be found in their hearts, for the imagination of their hearts was only evil, and that continually. This is not the character of a few of the more abandoned of our species, but is given in Scripture as the character of the human race—of all the sons of men in their natural state: “for the Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God: they are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” Unto men thus wholly corrupted and universally depraved—unto men thus mean and miserable, the good will of God through Jesus Christ is manifested. To what but to his own sovereign good pleasure is this grace to be attributed? Resolving it into this principle, we must say, “even so, Father, for so it hath seemed good in thy sight.” To no other cause can we ascribe it, for to no other is it attributed in Sacred Scripture. There he discovers good will to men, to men in contradistinc-

tion to angels, and to men of all nations and stations, of all characters and conditions in life; for the gospel is glad tidings unto all people. Thus, the consideration of the character and condition of men, shows that our redemption through Jesus Christ, springs from the mere good pleasure of God, and not from any thing in us, that could influence the divine will. But we said still farther, that this important truth would appear with convincing evidence from Sacred Scripture. To the decision of Scripture upon this subject, we must ultimately have recourse, and when we do so, its language is plain and explicit. We cannot mention all the passages where this doctrine is taught, but the following are too memorable and important to be omitted: Ex. xxxiii. 19—"And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy." This passage is the more remarkable and convincing, as it is quoted by the Apostle Paul in his epistle to the Romans, and applied to prove the same point, Deut. vii. 7, 8, "The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; but because the *Lord loved you.*" Eph. i. 4, 5—"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the *good pleasure of his will.*" 2 Tim. i. 9—"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his *own purpose and grace*, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." Tit. iii. 5—"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his *mercy* he saved us." Thus, it is evident from the uniform testimony of Sacred Scripture, that the redemption of sinners by

Jesus Christ is entirely owing to the free favour, or sovereign good pleasure of God. This is the fountain from which all the blessings of salvation flow, “for by grace we are saved through faith; and that not of ourselves: it is the gift of God; it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy, for grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life.” Here then we are called to contemplate the grace of God appearing in sovereign majesty to the sons of men, and deserving and demanding our wonder, gratitude, and praise. Here we behold what we shall never be able to comprehend—sovereign grace to sinful men who deserved nothing but tribulation and wrath, indignation and anguish. Lord, what is man that thou shouldest thus have been mindful of him, what the sons of men that thou shouldest thus have visited and regarded them?

II. We now proceed to the second part of this sacred song, and observe that, as the gospel proceeds from the good will of God, so it *proclaims and produces peace upon earth.*

1st. *It proclaims peace with God.* When man was created upon the earth he was holy, and therefore there was no discord between him and his Creator; on the contrary, the most friendly intercourse subsisted between them. In consequence of sin, however, this holy intercourse was destroyed. Man commenced rebel against his Maker, and his posterity by sin still carry on the destructive and ruinous war. They are enemies unto God in their minds, and by wicked works. The holiness of God being thus insulted, and his justice provoked by the disobedience of man, he could easily have crushed the impotent rebellion by consigning them over to everlasting misery.



He could have caused the earth to open her mouth and swallow them up, as he did with Korah and his company, or he could have overwhelmed them as he did Sodom and Gomorrah, by a deluge of fire. But entertaining good will to men, instead of cutting them off in their rebellion, he commands peace to be proclaimed upon this earth, and offers terms of reconciliation to those whom he might have made the victims of his incensed justice. This proclamation of peace, however, is through the mediation of Jesus Christ, and his undertaking the cause of sinners in the counsels of peace before the world was: for although God the Father entertained good will to men, yet this was to be exercised in a consistency with his holiness and justice, and with the dignity and equity of his divine administration. Hence it is that some atonement for sin became necessary, though what this atonement should be, reason could never have determined, nor the power of man provided when so discovered. The Scriptures of truth explain this important point, and exhibit Christ as the great propitiation for sin. Him God hath set forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood, that he might be just, and the justifier of all those who believe in Jesus. When we were at enmity with God, our peace was made with him by the sacrifice of his own Son, who loved us, and gave himself for us, a sacrifice and an offering to God of a sweet smelling savour. By this means sin was expiated, and the law fulfilled, and God is now in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing unto sinners their trespasses. Hence you see Christ is our peace, and hath made peace by the blood of his cross, for the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and it is by his stripes that we are healed. He is God's beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased. He is

the Prince of peace, and hath purchased it with his own blood. He has redeemed us unto God with his own blood, and we shall reign with him for ever and ever. Hence it is, that he leaves peace unto his people as his invaluable legacy. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." As Christ thus purchased peace by his own blood, so he proclaimed it by his gospel upon this earth, which is therefore emphatically styled, Rom. x. 15, "the gospel of peace." This gospel he preached in person while he remained in this world, and this gospel he commands all his servants to publish unto the sons of men, for they are to preach peace to them that are afar off, and to them that are nigh. Hence it is said, Is. lii. 7, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good things, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" God not only declares in this gospel, that, through the sacrifice of his own Son, he is ready to receive and pardon every returning sinner; but he even commands sinners who are enemies unto him to accept of the benefit of this indemnity, and assures them, if they do so, they shall have peace with him. Is. xxvii. 4, 5—"Fury is not in me: who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together. But let him take hold of my strength, (that is, of Christ who is the power of God) that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me." How welcome should this proclamation and command be unto the children of men! and how acceptable would it be, had we just views of our own character and condition! Terms of peace in this world are commonly pro-

posed by the party who has been worsted, and who is no longer able to maintain the conflict. But here peace is proclaimed by the party who cannot be hurt by the contest, and who is able to carry on the war to the utter destruction of all his enemies. This is a peace, too, that is safe, honourable, and permanent, that will never be violated on the part of Heaven, that includes in it every blessing, and secures the present and future happiness of all those who accept of it. God is now reconciled through the death of his Son, the tribunal of his justice is converted into a throne of mercy, and holding out the olive branch upon the sceptre of his grace, he invites his enemies to come to touch it, and live for ever. How joyful are the tidings of peace unto a people who have long been at war with a powerful enemy, and who have almost been destroyed by the unequal contest! but O, how much more joyful and acceptable should this proclamation of peace be unto all the enemies of God who hear it in this world! and with what alacrity and gratitude ought they to accept of it! We then are ambassadors for Christ, and therefore as if God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God.

2d. In order to persuade you to this, consider that peace with God is always connected with *peace of conscience in this world*. While men are enemies to God, it is impossible they can enjoy any solid peace of mind. Their corrupt passions and sinful propensities will still prompt them to commit what their consciences must condemn; and therefore there is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked. What a painful disease is to the body, that is sin to the soul; it distresses the mind, and is the never-failing source of uneasiness and remorse. Peace of conscience can only flow from peace with



God, and the application of that which satisfies the justice of Heaven. Now, as all men have sinned, so no man by any thing he can do or suffer, can obtain true peace of mind. He can neither make atonement for his past transgressions, nor promise future perfect obedience. It is only what satisfies the justice of God that can satisfy the demands of an awakened and enlightened conscience; and as the sacrifice of Christ has done the former, the actual application of the blood of Christ by the Holy Spirit can produce the latter. It is by this sacrifice that justice is satisfied, and conscience pacified and purified; for when the sinner by faith is reconciled unto God, he is also reconciled unto his own conscience, which from an accusing enemy becomes an approving friend. This is the glory of the gospel dispensation, and arises from the perfection of the sacrifice of Christ; for though the sacrifices under the law could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience, yet the sacrifice of Christ is sufficient for this purpose, and therefore the Apostle reasons in the most conclusive manner, Heb. ix. 13, 14, "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" By this means the guilt of sin is removed, and sin being pardoned, peace is restored to the troubled soul. Thus you see it is by faith in the blood of Christ, that peace with God and peace of conscience are obtained and preserved; for the Christian is filled with joy and peace only in believing. This peace is also increased by the Christian's walking in the way of universal holi-

ness ; for “ the fruit of righteousness is peace, and the effect of it is quietness and assurance for ever.” The conscience, however, of the holiest man upon earth, could not be pure and peaceful without the daily application of the blood of Christ ; for as he is daily falling into sin, he must daily be applying unto this opened fountain for its removal. By a continual application of the blood of Christ, and a steady progression in holiness, this peace of mind is preserved and increased ; the testimony of conscience becomes more pleasing and perceptible, until its sentence is confirmed by the approbation of its Lord, “ Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” How precious is the blessing of peace of conscience ! Its value is inestimable. Next to peace with God, it is the most important blessing we can enjoy in this world, and the gospel is the only scheme that points out the way in which it is to be obtained ; for, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. By coming unto Christ, we find rest unto our souls, and then the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeps the heart and the mind through Jesus Christ.

3d. It is farther to be observed, that the gospel tends to promote *peace and harmony among men in this world*. This, indeed, has been doubted and denied by some who are enemies to the gospel, and who represent it as unfriendly to the peace and good order of society. Our Saviour, they allege, allows this, when he says, Mat. xvi. 34, that he came not “ to send peace on earth, but a sword.” Now, although we admit that the gospel has been the *innocent occasion* of much contention and cruelty in the world, yet we deny

that it ever was, or will be the *cause* of either. The spirit of the gospel is benevolent and pacific, and tends directly to promote the harmony and happiness of mankind. As it brings good tidings of great joy to all people, so it is calculated to unite mankind in the bonds of christian love, and to promote the happiness of the whole human race. Christ, the author of this gospel, was peace manifested and embodied in our nature. When he was reviled, he reviled not again; and when the sword through indiscreet zeal was drawn in his defence, he commanded it to be sheathed. His doctrines corresponded with his life, for they were the doctrines of peace. He instructed his followers not only to be at peace among themselves, but to love their enemies, and to do good unto those who despitefully used and persecuted them. This gospel, therefore, while it restores peace between heaven and earth, and introduces peace of conscience, as we have shown, at the same time banishes from the minds of men all those malignant and turbulent passions which fill the world with mischief and misery. It unites men in one great christian society. It breaks down that middle wall of partition which separated Jews and Gentiles; for Christ hath abolished in his flesh the enmity, "for to make in himself of twain, one new man, so making peace." From its doctrines, when cordially embraced, the most peaceful effects might naturally be expected, and in fact have been produced, wherever this gospel has been understood, believed, and obeyed. Its spirit has spread through the different relations of life, and insensibly wrought itself into the frame-work and constitution of christian states. It has restrained the spirit of the prince and the madness of the people—it has given tenderness to the parent and humanity to the master



—it has softened the rigours of despotism, and always brought civil liberty in its train; for it is extremely remarkable that this blessing is enjoyed in proportion to the purity in which the doctrines of the gospel are taught and professed in European states. Where these approach the nearest to the native purity of the gospel, there peace and civil liberty shine forth in their brightest lustre. Mankind are therefore under infinite obligations to the pacific genius of the gospel, and they cannot promote the interests of society more effectually, than by embracing and obeying it. This gospel, when believed, removes the causes of contention; it subdues those evil passions from which public wars and private animosities arise; it teaches us to love as brethren, to follow peace with all men, to fear God, and to honour the king. If the gospel therefore has not yet produced all those peaceful effects which might have been expected, it is not owing to the gospel, but to the want of it; to its not being understood or believed by those who hear it. The state of the world, however, by the gospel is evidently meliorating. It has abolished in many places idolatry and human sacrifices—the rights of conscience and of private judgment are more clearly understood, and more generally acknowledged; and we are assured the period is approaching when this gospel shall be universally known and believed, and then universal peace and concord shall prevail; for, in the beautiful language of the prophet, Is. xi. 6—9, “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like

the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain : for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

III. We now come, in the third and last place, to consider the scheme of our salvation by Jesus Christ, as terminating *in glory to God in the highest*. It is here almost unnecessary to remark, that as God is infinitely glorious in himself, so his essential glory is incapable of any addition or diminution, for he is God over all, and blessed for ever. In Scripture, however, God is said to be glorified either when his glory is displayed before his creatures, or when they are induced by this discovery to ascribe unto him the praise that is due unto his name. "He that offereth praise glorifieth God, and to him that ordereth his conversation aright, will he show his salvation." Now although God is, and will be glorified in all his works, yet as one star differs from another in glory, so more of the glory of God shines in some of his works than in others. But of all the works of God, which come within the sphere of our knowledge, the work of redemption is the most astonishing, for more of the glory of God shines in this work than in all his other works.

1st. Herein he is glorified in the highest manner and degree, for the scheme of redemption through Jesus Christ, displays the *glory of all the persons in the adorable Trinity*. Though from the light of nature we may be convinced that there is one God, yet it is only from revelation we learn that this God subsists in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. For there are

three that bear record in heaven, and these three are one. The glory of all these three persons appears in the different offices they sustain, and parts which they perform in the amazing scheme of our salvation. Here we see the glory of the Father in devising the stupendous scheme, in appointing his Son to the office of mediator, in giving testimony to him from heaven, in supporting him in his work, in accepting his sacrifice, in raising him from the dead, and in setting him down at his own right hand in the heavenly world. Here, too, we contemplate the glory of the Son in generously undertaking our cause, in the assumption of our nature into personal union with the divine, and thereby becoming God manifest in the flesh; in the astonishing miracles he performed, in the spotless life he led, in the pure doctrines which he taught, and in his sufferings unto death, when he gave himself for us a sacrifice and an offering unto God of a sweet smelling savour. "We beheld," said the disciples, "his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." And here, finally, we see the glory of the Holy Spirit in descending upon Christ at his baptism, in coming down in his miraculous gifts on the day of pentecost, and in his coming into the hearts of sinners, enlightening their minds in the knowledge of Christ, in comforting them in sorrow, strengthening them in weakness, adorning them with his precious fruits, and sealing them unto the day of eternal redemption. "He shall glorify me," said Christ, speaking of the Spirit, "for he shall receive of mine and show it unto you." Thus you see that in the plan and execution of our redemption by Jesus Christ, the glory of all the persons in the adorable Godhead distinctly appears—the glory of a three-one Jehovah, shines forth



with peculiar splendour, and therefore, in this view, it may well be said to terminate in glory to God in the highest.

2d. The scheme of our redemption by Jesus Christ terminates in glory to God in the highest, because *the glory of all the divine perfections shines forth in it* with the brightest lustre, and most beautiful harmony. Although much of the glory of God may be seen in his other works, for the heavens above us display his glory, and the firmament shows forth his handy-work ; yet in the face of nature we cannot behold all the divine perfections, for these are only to be seen in the face of Jesus Christ. Nature through all her works affords us no discovery of divine mercy, or of the intentions of God with regard to his guilty creatures. A full and satisfying view of all the divine attributes is only to be obtained in the contrivance and execution of the plan of redemption by Jesus Christ. Here we see the glory of divine power made visible in the person of Jesus Christ, in his bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, which would have crushed the strongest created intelligence, and in his rising again from the dead, by which he was declared to be the Son of God with power. Here we see the glory of divine wisdom in proposing the best ends, the glory of God and the salvation of sinners, and in accomplishing these ends by the wisest and the best means. How the glory of God should appear in punishing the guilty, or in making the innocent happy, may easily be conceived ; but in what manner it should be displayed in promoting the good of the criminal, and in bringing peace and salvation from guilt and misery, is a question which the sublimest created intelligence could not solve, and to which infinite wisdom alone can give a satisfactory answer. In the

scheme of salvation, then, through Jesus Christ, we have a wondrous display of divine wisdom, for by this plan sin is punished and the sinner saved, the demands of law and justice are answered, and the obedience and salvation of the believer secured. When we contemplate the manifold wisdom of God which this scheme reveals, we must exclaim with the Apostle, Rom xi. 33, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Here we see the glory of the divine holiness, and learn from this scheme God's infinite hatred of sin, and that he is so pure that he cannot be approached by sinners but through the sacrifice and mediation of his own Son. In our redemption by Jesus Christ, God indeed appears glorious in his holiness. Here also is seen the glory of divine justice in demanding satisfaction from the surety for the sins of his people, and in not releasing him from the prison until he had paid the uttermost farthing. Our redemption by the blood of Christ gives a more awful manifestation of divine justice, than could have been made by the punishment of all guilty creatures. How strict that justice which spared not his own Son, but delivered him up to the death for us all! If justice could have remitted punishment, would not this have taken place when the Son of God was to pay and satisfy? But justice spared him not; her sword awoke against him and cut him off; and he is set forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood, that God might be just, and the justifier of all those who believe on Jesus. Here too the glory of divine goodness shines in all its beauty. This perfection smiles in the works of creation, and is seen in the daily provision of providence, for in this respect God is good unto all; but goodness opens all her treasures in the work of

redemption, and bestows upon us the richest gift which God could give, or man receive. Here also we see the glory of divine truth and faithfulness in fulfilling the promise made unto the fathers, and in executing the sentence of the law upon the surety of his people. And here, finally, we behold the glory of that mercy in which God delights. The glory of this lovely attribute would in all probability have been for ever concealed from our eyes, had it not been revealed to us in the amazing scheme of our salvation by the Saviour. From this plan, however, we learn that God is merciful: we hear his name proclaimed by himself to be "the Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." The glory of divine mercy sheds a softening light over all the other perfections of God, and unites them in the sweetest bonds; for here mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other. Here, in short, the glory of all the divine perfections is displayed, and they shine more bright in union than they could do apart. As all the original colours appear in the rainbow, which is therefore allowed to be one of the most beautiful objects in nature, so all the perfections of God meet and shine in the scheme of our redemption, which therefore gives glory to God in the highest manner and degree.

3d. The plan of our redemption by Jesus Christ terminates in glory to God in the highest, because it gives occasion to the *ascription of the highest praise unto him* by his people in this world, and in that which is to come. Every Christian offers praise unto God continually. In this exercise, however, he is regulated by the various gifts which Heaven bestows upon him, and by the different displays of the divine glory



which he beholds. When any interposition is of remarkable importance, and the glory of God shines in it with peculiar lustre, his praise will bear some proportion to it, and through grace be more elevated than usual. But as the gift of Christ is unspeakable, and his love in accomplishing our salvation sheds a lustre upon all the other ways and works of God—as the glory of God shines in this scheme in the highest manner, so it deserves and demands the Christian's highest praise. Accordingly, though he praises God every day for all his mercies, for the wonders of creation and the bounties of providence, yet his most exalted praise is excited and inspired by the riches of redeeming love. When he fixes his attention on this wonderful work, and contemplates it under the influence of the Spirit, and in the light of the word, his heart melts with love and gratitude, and his mouth is opened in the praises of the Lord. He sings unto the Lord a new song, and rejoices in the salvation of the glorious gospel. To this all the children of Zion are invited by the Psalmist, Ps. cxlix. 1, 5, "Praise ye the Lord. Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints. Let the saints be joyful in glory." This was the case with Mary when she said, Luke i. 46, 47, 49, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name." This praise is comely for the upright, and will be celebrated with the greatest pleasure by all those whose hearts are fired, and filled with a sense of redeeming grace. "We will not forget," they will say, "all thy benefits, O Lord; in a peculiar manner we would remember and celebrate the wonders of thy redeeming love. Blessed

be God, who hath visited and redeemed his people, and raised up for them an horn of salvation in the house of his servant David. Bless the Lord, O our souls, and forget not all his benefits : who redeemeth our lives from destruction, and crowneth us with loving-kindness and tender mercies." In this manner, God will be glorified while he has a Church upon earth, and through the revolutions of eternity he will be praised by the redeemed in strains higher than our present powers can reach, or imaginations conceive. In the highest heavens he will be celebrated in the highest manner, and the subject of this song of praise will be redeeming love. While the glory of God will for ever illuminate the heavenly temple, the praises of God will be continually sung, for there they cease not, day nor night, in their joyful acclamations and new songs of praise. Then the redeemed will join in one vast assembly, while they sing, and say, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, for he hath redeemed us unto God by his own blood." "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, be glory and dominion for ever and ever." Nay, the heavenly hosts that sung so sweetly upon the plains of Bethlehem, with all the angels around the throne, will unite with the redeemed from among men in one full chorus, and swell the song of praise, while they say, Rev. v. 12, 13, with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever." Now, if they who offer praise glorify God, and if the scheme of salvation give occasion to the as-

cription of such praise unto God on earth and in heaven for ever, must it not terminate in glory to God in the highest ?

Having thus finished what we proposed upon this subject, it only now remains that we conclude with some application suited to the subject and the solemn service we have immediately in view.

1st. From what has been said, we may see the *original source of our salvation* by Christ. The fountain from whence it proceeds is divine philanthropy, sovereign grace or good will to men. To this source all the blessings of salvation are ultimately to be traced ; and here we are to stand with admiration and joy, and adore and praise what we shall never be able fully to comprehend. Sovereign and saving grace will be the wonder of eternity, and it will always be the object of the highest admiration to the believer in this world. “Behold what manner of love is this the Father hath bestowed upon us ; for God, even the Father, hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace.” This love is free, self-moving, and unpurchased, and passeth all understanding. “This is the doing of the Lord, and it is marvellous in our eyes.” “Lord, what is man, that thou hast thus been mindful of him, or the children of men, that thou shouldest visit and regard them.” “By grace we are saved, through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God, and grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life.”

2d. If the gospel is good will to men, then hence you may see *a door of hope opened to the chief of sinners*. The greatest guilt and unworthiness can be no insuperable bar in the way of pardon and acceptance ; for “where sin hath abounded, grace doth much more abound.” Although you have been



enemies to God, he has manifested his good will to you, in order that you may hear, believe, and be saved. Sinners can have no hope but from the compassionate proclamation issued from a throne of grace. This is so extensive as to bring hope to every soul that hears it. "Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is unto the sons of men, for the promise is unto you, and to your seed, and to all that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call." Let not your impenitence and unbelief then shut this door which mercy hath opened, but enter by faith and you shall be saved.

3d. From what hath been said, I would *exhort sinners to be reconciled unto God*. For this purpose peace is now proclaimed on earth by the glorious gospel. Consider, I beseech you, the grace of God, your present condition, and the dreadful consequences of despising divine mercy. You are at present the enemies of God, engaged in a war which, if you continue to prosecute it, must terminate in your destruction. Although God could have cut you off in a moment, and consumed you from the face of the earth, yet he hath discovered good will towards you, and caused peace by the gospel to be offered you upon safe and honourable terms. Will you not listen to the overtures of grace? Will you despise this offered mercy? Are you able to wage war against Heaven with success, or have you measured the extent of that power which you dare to defy? Are you determined to persevere in your infatuated course, until you extort, as it were, destruction from the Almighty. O, be persuaded by the terrors of the Lord, or rather be allured by the mercy of God, to be reconciled unto him, and to accept of the peace that is now offered unto you. O, that the Lord would touch the hearts of sinners, open their eyes, and snatch the weapons of

rebellion from their hands, and make them a willing people in the day of his power!

4th. From what has been said, you may see that all real *Christians ought to live in love and peace with one another*. As the gospel brings good will from God to men, so it ought to restore good will to men among themselves; and it will produce this effect wherever it is known, believed, and felt. Enjoying peace with God, let real Christians learn to be at peace among themselves, and to discover a benevolent and pacific disposition towards all men. That sinners who have neither peace with God nor any solid peace in their own consciences, should live in malice and in envy, hateful and hating one another, is nothing extraordinary; but that Christians, who know and love the truth, and who are all brethren in Christ Jesus, should hate one another, or not be at peace with one another, is astonishing and distressing. Such a temper is opposite unto the christian character, and incompatible with the acceptable performance of the sacred service now before us. If any of us have aught against our brother, we should first go and be reconciled, and then come and offer our gift. Let all real Christians, then, love as brethren. Let them agree to differ upon some points of less importance; but let not this difference of sentiment occasion any alienation of affection. As far as they are agreed, (and all real Christians who are taught of God must be agreed upon the leading doctrines of the gospel,) let them walk by the same rule, let them mind the same things. Let them be at peace among themselves, and, if possible, live peaceably with all men. By walking in the path of peace, they shall adorn the gospel of peace, which they profess to believe, remove the unreasonable prejudices of men against

the truth, recommend the religion of Jesus to the notice and esteem of the world, and promote, in the most effectual manner, the comfort and edification of their own souls ; for “ the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.”

5th, and to conclude. From what has been said, let all who love the Lord Jesus Christ, and who are to remember his death at his table, be stirred up to unite with the angels in their anthem of praise, and say, “ Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will towards men.” Let them bless God for his sovereign love, and be glad and rejoice in Christ, and give honour unto him, for he is the same to-day, yesterday, and for ever. The voice of saints in heaven is not wanting in that full chorus which ascribes glory to him. They cordially unite with angels in their joyful songs. Let us begin in the earthly sanctuary the employment of the higher house, and join with angels and saints around the throne in singing a new song of praise unto the Lord. Let us go to his table with hearts warmed with his love, and mouths opened to celebrate his highest praise. Thus let us express our gratitude to God and the Lamb for our redemption, originating in sovereign love, proclaiming peace upon earth, and terminating in glory to God in the highest. What an amazing origin, pleasing progress, and glorious termination ! May the Lord send forth his light and truth to lead and guide us ; then will we go unto the altar of God, unto God, our exceeding joy ! Amen.



## SERMON V.

### CHRISTIANS REDEEMED WITH THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST.

1 PET. i. 18, 19.

“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

THE redemption of sinners by the precious blood of Christ, is the most astonishing event that ever took place in this world, and we have no reason to believe that anything of a similar nature will be exhibited during the ages of eternity. Planned in the councils of heaven, it was typified under the Mosaic economy, was foretold by the ancient prophets, and exactly fulfilled in the death of Christ. Upon the redemption of Christ in truth all our hopes as guilty sinners depend, and from it the present sanctification and future prospects of Christians arise. This is the grand doctrine, therefore, which the inspired writers of the New Testament invariably keep in view, and which they bring forward upon every occasion to confirm the faith, inflame the love, and establish the obedience of true believers. From this doctrine, as from a precious treasury, they bring comfort to the afflicted, direction to the doubtful, obligations to duty, and motives to universal holiness. It is therefore entirely owing to their ignorance of the nature of this redemption, and their want of interest in the blessings which it secures, that the hearts of sinners are so cold and worldly, and their lives so impious and

impure. It is likewise owing to the partial view which even real Christians take of this truth, and the inattention and unbelief with which they survey it, that their comforts are so scanty, their praises so languid, and their holiness so imperfect. Although the review of this glorious doctrine and the truths which it involves, must at all times by the divine blessing be useful unto a christian auditory, yet we hope it will prove peculiarly suitable upon the present occasion when we are met to commemorate the death of our Redeemer, and that through divine influence it will be highly acceptable and useful to every intending communicant. In order to direct your views and to assist your meditations upon this subject, all that we propose is,

I. To consider the situation of men, previous to their knowledge of the redemption of Christ, and their personal interest in its provisions.

II. To illustrate the nature of this redemption, and the means by which it is accomplished.

III. To point out the influence which the knowledge of this redemption, and of personal interest in it, will have upon the hearts and lives of the redeemed in this world.

I. We are to consider the situation of men previous to their knowledge of the redemption of Christ, and interest in its blessings. And here,

1st. We observe that sinners while in this situation are in *a state of the grossest ignorance*. That the heathen nations were involved in gross darkness before the appearance of Christ, will be allowed by every one who is acquainted with their history. Their wise men were ignorant of the first principles of religion, and by the mul-

tiplicity of their opinions, instead of enlightening, they perplexed the minds of the people. Even those among them who were men of profound intellectual abilities, who cultivated their powers and carried their researches to the utmost, were ignorant of the nature and perfections of God; of the extent and superintendence of his providence; of the relations in which we stand to him as our creator, preserver, and judge; and of the rational worship which, as his intelligent creatures, we are bound to pay him. Their notions of Deity were confused and contradictory; their systems of duty were imperfect and defective; and their anticipations of futurity were dark and dismal. Of this the wiser among them were so sensible, that they expressed a desire that God would send them a teacher to instruct them in the knowledge of divine truth, as it existed in the divine mind. Now, if this was the state of religious knowledge among the wise and learned in the heathen nations, who devoted their time and attention to these subjects, what must have been the situation of the great body of the people? Must they not have been sunk in the grossest and most deplorable ignorance? Must they not have been walking in darkness, and living without God, and without hope in the world? The Jewish nation before this period, it is true, enjoyed a divine revelation, which preserved among them the knowledge of the first principles of religion; but even this light had been darkened by the traditions and false interpretations of their elders and teachers. For the doctrines of revelation they had received the commandments of men, and paid greater attention to the oral, than to the written law. Even among them the law of God was made void, the commandment was of none effect, and their light was turned into darkness. Hence



our Saviour, with just severity, declares, Mat. xv. 6, 9, "That by their tradition they had made the commandment of God of none effect; and that in vain they worshipped him, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Thus it is evident, that before the appearance of Christ, and the accomplishment of his redemption, the whole world was sunk into a state of the grossest ignorance. The world by its wisdom knew not God, for, in the emphatic language of the prophet, Is. lx. 2, "darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people."

2d. While sinners are without interest in the redemption of Christ they are in a state of *guilt and condemnation*. When God created man upon the earth, to direct his conduct he inscribed his law upon his heart. Although, in consequence of our apostacy, this law is much effaced, yet its great and general outlines are still preserved; for the heathen, who have not the written law, are a law unto themselves, which shows the works of the law to be written upon their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another. With the transgression of this law of nature, the whole heathen world are justly chargeable. Accordingly they are affected with a sense of guilt, and discover a dread of vengeance from some superior power; for their consciences tell them they are guilty, and that they deserve to suffer punishment for their sins. Although among the more rude and barbarous this sense of guilt may be more strongly felt when they experience outward calamities, such as the horrors of war, and the devastation of famine and pestilence, yet even in the calmer and softer scenes of life, they are not entirely free from a consciousness of transgression. This is evi-

dent from their continued rites and ceremonies, and from their repeated sacrifices to appease the wrath of an offended Deity. Their religious ceremonies proclaim a sense of guilt, and their dread of the Deity a consciousness of transgression. If the Gentiles are thus guilty in violating the laws of nature, the Jews, who are favoured with a divine revelation, are still more criminal in transgressing the written law. The moral law, which the Almighty with so much solemnity delivered unto them at Mount Sinai, they have not observed, but violated in almost every particular. Thus Jews and Gentiles are involved in guilt, and liable to condemnation. To prove this melancholy and alarming truth is the great design of the Apostle in the first part of his epistle to the Romans, where, after a train of close and convincing reasoning, he concludes all under guilt. Rom. iii. 19—"Now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." Thus, by the accusing voice of conscience, and the condemnatory language of Scripture, the whole world are brought in as guilty. We appear as criminals at the bar of divine justice, and instead of vindicating our conduct, and maintaining our innocence, we must plead guilty; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. If they who offend in one point are guilty of all, and if the righteous sentence of the divine law is, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them;" where is the person that can say he is innocent, or free from condemnation?

3d. While sinners have no interest in the redemption of Christ, they are in a state of *slavery and misery*. This, indeed, must be the natural

consequence of the facts which we have already stated; for if mankind are sunk in ignorance, and distressed with a sense of guilt, little liberty or happiness can be enjoyed by them. That this is their real situation, the testimony of Scripture, and the experience of sinners before they come unto Christ, abundantly confirm. "Who-soever committeth sin," saith our blessed Lord, John viii. 34, "is the servant of sin," or the slave of sin, for the service of this master is slavery, and his wages death. Sin not only entails guilt upon the conscience, but it enfeebles and paralyzes the powers of our mind. It introduces disorder into our moral nature, and subverts the constitution which God had originally established in our hearts. The superior powers of the mind by means of sin become subject unto the inferior, and the sinner becomes the meanest and most unhappy of all slaves, for he becomes a slave to his own corrupt inclinations and criminal desires. Instead of acting according to the dignity and dictates of his rational nature, or finding any liberty and happiness in the service of God, he follows the impulse of some corrupt lust or wayward passion, and is a stranger to the felicity which arises from a sense of the favour of God. Liberty and peace are banished from his breast, and anarchy and confusion therein prevail. The wild disorder that obtains in a convulsed state, when subordination and regular government are annihilated, or the ravages of a furious and irresistible storm, are but faint emblems of the disorder and misery that reign in the sinner's mind. As the just punishment of his criminal conduct, he is delivered over to the power of the prince of darkness, who rules in the hearts of the children of disobedience, and carries them captive at his will. He inflames



their passions and increases their servitude, and wreathes their galling chains more closely around their necks. He holds them in the basest vassalage, and employs them in the meanest and most ignoble service. To complete their misery, they are seized with infatuation: they hug their chains, and glory in their slavery and shame. They foolishly imagine, with the Jews of old, that they are free, while they are bound in fetters, and hurried onward to everlasting misery. They imagine that they are rich, and increased in goods, and stand in need of nothing; while in the mean time they are poor, and miserable, and wretched, and blind, and naked, and stand in need of all things. Their imaginary wealth is poverty, their fancied freedom is slavery, and their ideal happiness is positive misery. Their souls, in the nature of things, must be strangers to genuine liberty and real rational enjoyment; for dissatisfaction with present good, a sense of conscious guilt, and a dread of future misery, must scorch their fairest flowers, and blast their fondest hopes. In midst of laughter their hearts are often sad, in midst of their abundance they are in want, and in midst of external peace they feel themselves in a storm. So true is that declaration of God by the prophet, Is. lvii. 21, "There is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked." Unto them we may justly apply these emphatic words of the prophet, Is. lix. 7, 8; "Their feet run to evil: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths; the way of of peace they know not." In short, they enjoy no rational freedom or solid satisfaction in this world, and without interest in the redemption of Christ, the chains of darkness and everlasting misery must be their certain portion in the world to come. Such, then, is the situation of mankind previous to

their saving knowledge of the redemption of Christ. But are sinners to be allowed to remain in this miserable state, without remedy or hope? Is there no friendly eye to pity their forlorn situation—no powerful arm to bring them redemption and relief? Yes, blessed be God, though sinning angels are in sovereignty allowed to perish, redemption is sent to the fallen sinful sons of men; for they are redeemed, “not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” But this naturally brings me forward,

II. To explain the nature of this redemption, and the means by which it is accomplished. And here let it be observed, that redemption, when applied unto persons, properly signifies to deliver them from slavery—from punishment, or death, and may be effected either by purchase or by power. The price of our redemption is said in the text to be the precious blood of Christ, which signifies, in the strict acceptation of the term, the merits of his death. Sometimes, however, it is to be regarded as denoting the whole of his work and sufferings as our Redeemer. Thus, Rom. v. 9, believers are said to be justified by his blood, that is, by his obedience and sufferings unto death, which are also styled the redemption that is in Christ—“being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” In considering this part of our subject, therefore, though we shall insist more fully upon the leading idea in the mind of the Apostle, we shall not entirely confine ourselves to its illustration, but take a more general and extensive view of the nature of redemption. And here we apprehend that the nature of this work, and the means by which it is accomplished, will be better understood, and more clearly

illustrated, by attending to the miserable situation in which we have seen sinners are all by nature placed.

1st. Are sinners in the grossest ignorance as to those truths which it is of the greatest importance for them to know?—then Christ, as their Redeemer, delivers them from this miserable situation by *imparting unto them, through his word and Spirit, divine and saving knowledge*. Although Christ by his word is the light of the world, or of his visible church, which may therefore be called the valley of vision, yet many who enjoy this word, through their own criminal carelessness remain in the grossest ignorance. Light has come into the world, but they love darkness; nay, light shines in the world, but their darkness comprehends it not. When Christ, therefore, redeems his people from this deplorable situation, he not only reveals the truth externally unto them in his word, but he opens their understanding to know it: he arrests their attention, he removes their prejudices, he directs their powers, and gives them a spiritual faculty to discern the glory, importance, and excellency of divine truth. The entrance of the word by the Spirit now gives light, and makes wise the simple. They see divine truth in a new and interesting light. The gospel appears unto them a wise and a wonderful scheme. They no longer regard it as foolishness, but they consider it as the wisdom of God; for they have eyes now given them to see, and hearts given them to know the Lord. God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into their minds, to give them to see the light of the knowledge of his glory as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ. Thus he opened the understandings of his disciples to understand the Scriptures. He



opened the heart of Lydia to attend unto the things which were spoken of Paul, and he called the believing Jews, in their dispersion, from darkness into his own marvellous light. Those who are thus taught of God to know the truth as it is in Jesus, have a discerning eye, and a distinguishing ear. They not only know the truth, but they feel it, and feed upon it. They can say, "Thy word was found of us, and we did eat it, and it was unto us the joy and rejoicing of our hearts." In divine knowledge they are making daily progress, and their path in knowledge is like that of the morning light, shining more and more unto the perfect day. Such individuals as these have felt the truth of that consolatory description given of Christ in ancient prophecy, Is. xxxv. 5, and xlii. 6, 7, "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped; for I have given thee for a light of the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house."

2d. Are sinners involved in a state of guilt and condemnation?—then Christ *redeems them from guilt and punishment, by giving his life a ransom for them*. As this appears to be the leading idea in the view of the inspired writer, and is the foundation of all the other parts of redemption, so it may be proper to consider it with some degree of attention. Let it be remembered, then, that as sinners are guilty in the sight of God, and as the sentence of the divine law is death in all its extent, so God might have in justice inflicted upon them this punishment—"the soul that sinneth, it shall die;" and as we all have transgressed, we deserved to have been doomed to destruction. Suppose even that a sufficient ransom had been

found, and a person able and willing to give it, God the Father was under no obligation to receive it, but might in justice have inflicted upon us the penalty of the broken law. It is entirely owing, therefore, to the sovereign good pleasure of God that a redeemer is provided, or a ransom accepted for guilty men. But whence is this redeemer to come, or where is the mighty ransom to be found? The redemption of one soul is so precious that if no other ransom than what this world can afford is to be found, it must cease for ever. Here, then, let us admire the riches of redeeming love! Our glorious Redeemer generously interposes, saying, "Save them from going down into the pit. I have found out a ransom. Let a body, or human nature, be prepared for me, that I may at once have the right to redemption, and a ransom to pay, and rather than these shall suffer and die, I will give my life a ransom for them." Justice in union with mercy permits the substitution, and Jesus, in the fulness of time, appears in human nature to pay the price of the redemption of his people, by giving his life for the life of the world. Hence it is that the death of Christ is uniformly represented in Scripture as an atonement for sin, and as the price of our deliverance from guilt and condemnation. He is represented as enduring all in the room and stead of his people, and as redeeming or purchasing them with his own most precious blood. This truth is so clearly and frequently taught in the New Testament, that it requires the boldest and most unnatural perversion of language to make the passages which assert it speak any other doctrine. What, for instance, can be the plain meaning of these decisive declarations?—"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man should lay down his life for his friend; but herein hath God commended

his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. He hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." There is one passage, however, viewed in connection with our text, that appears to us to be so decisive upon this point, that we must beg leave to direct your attention to it. 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20— "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? for ye are bought with a price:" and this price, we learn from the text, is the precious blood of Christ, which he gave a ransom for us. Now it is essential unto the very idea of purchase, that some price or equivalent be given in the room of that which is bought or redeemed. This is universally understood, and is absolutely necessary to constitute redemption by purchase; and therefore we are taught in this passage with a plainness which no sophistry can evade, that the sufferings and death of Christ were of a vicarious nature, and were a satisfaction for the sins, and a ransom for the souls of his people. These sins he bore in his own body upon the tree, when he suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God. This is the peculiar honour of our Redeemer, and a work which he could not share with any creature, even of the highest order. If to instruct mankind in the knowledge of their duty, to set them an example of patience and resignation, and to confirm his doctrine by sealing the truth of it with his blood; nay, if even to assure mankind that God would be gracious, and that upon their repentance and obedience they would be forgiven and received into favour;—if such was the only way in which Christ was to redeem the sons of men, then there was nothing peculiar in his character, nothing but



what any prophet might have fully performed. In all these respects, the prophets and apostles lived and died for us, and may be said to be redeemers. They by the appointment of God instructed the world in the knowledge of their duty. Their patience is exhibited to us in Scripture for our imitation, and the most of them sealed the truth of their mission and doctrines with their blood. They too declared that the Lord God was merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and of great loving-kindness, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that all who turned unto him through Christ should live. But although the prophets and apostles were engaged in this respect in the same work as Christ, yet they never describe themselves as dying for the redemption of sinners; nay, one of the most distinguished of them declares his abhorrence of this thought, when he says, "Was Paul crucified for you?" To die as an atonement for the sins of men, to give his life a ransom for them, and to shed his precious blood to deliver us from guilt and misery, must be regarded as the peculiar honour and unrivalled excellence of our dear Redeemer. His name alone is Jesus, and redemption by his blood is his undivided glory. It is this that makes his love so wondrous, and that will be the subject of unceasing praise by the redeemed through eternity. There they cease not with growing ardour to sing and say, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive all power, and riches, and honour, and glory, and blessing, for he hath redeemed us unto God by his own blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and we shall reign with him for ever and ever." But as the price of our redemption is said in the text to be the precious blood of Christ, we must illustrate this important expression. In doing so we observe, that the

blood of Christ is precious, because it is the blood of a person of infinite dignity and excellence. It is a dictate of natural reason that the value of the blood—that is, the obedience, sufferings, and death of any creature rises in proportion to the dignity and excellence of its nature. Thus the blood of any inferior animal is looked upon as of less worth and importance than that of a man. Were an angel to assume our nature, his blood, upon this principle, would be more precious than that of a human being. When, therefore, the Son of God assumes our nature, and thereby becomes Immanuel, God with us, what must be the worth and merit of his blood? If dignity of nature give merit and value unto the sufferings and death of him who is possessed of it, surely the blood of Christ must be infinitely precious. His divine nature communicated infinite worth unto his obedience and death; and hence the absurdity must appear very great, of insinuating or asserting that the merit of the blood of Christ arises solely from the sovereign appointment of the Father and his own perfect innocence. Such an insinuation is equally unphilosophical and unscriptural. It is unphilosophical, because it annihilates intrinsic worth and excellence, by placing the lowest upon the same level with the highest intelligences; and it is unscriptural, because we are taught in the word, that the merit of the blood of Christ arises from his being a person of divine excellence. This is evident from that memorable expression, Acts xx. 28, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” Had Christ been guilty, his sufferings could have been of no avail unto us. But it is not his inno-

ence alone that communicates value unto them; for, upon this principle, the blood of a lamb, which is an innocent creature, or the blood of Adam, while in a state of innocence, must have been as precious as the blood of Christ, which is a thought too gross and impious to be once entertained by any Christian. It is in vain to allege that his innocence must be the sole cause of the merit of his blood, because he is here compared to a lamb without blemish and without spot, as the comparison here is not made so much between the innocence of Christ and that of the lamb, as between the manner in which Israel obtained deliverance by the pascal lamb, and that in which Christians receive redemption through the blood of Christ. They obtained deliverance, it is well known, by the shedding of its blood, and its being sprinkled upon the lintels and door posts of their houses; and Christians obtain redemption by the shedding of the blood of Christ, and its being sprinkled upon their consciences by the application of the Spirit. Hence, the Apostle observes, that Christ our passover is sacrificed for us, and that we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our sins according to the riches of his grace. From this, then, we hope it is evident that the blood of Christ is precious, not merely on account of the appointment of the Father and his perfect innocence, though these are not to be excluded, but principally because of the infinite dignity of his person as the only begotten Son of God. But again, the blood of Christ is precious when compared with the most valuable things in this world. Silver and gold are the most valuable articles known among men, and by these we estimate the worth of other things. When these, however, are compared with the blood of Christ, they lose all their value, and sink into



insignificance and nothing. Nay, this blood is more precious than our very lives—than our health or relatives, and all that is deemed estimable upon earth. None of these could redeem a single soul. Our first-born cannot be accepted for our transgression, nor can thousands of rivers of oil; but this precious blood redeems myriads of sinners. But you must be convinced that the blood of Christ is precious, if you consider farther what it has purchased for us. If we are to judge of the value of anything by the worth of the blessings it procures, how precious must be the blood of Christ! It hath procured for us every blessing in time, and purchased an incorruptible, glorious, and unfading inheritance in the heavenly world. Hence heaven itself is emphatically styled in Scripture a purchased possession, and all its glory is to be enjoyed by the merit of the blood of Christ. Rev. vii. 14, 15—“These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore are they before the throne.” The blood of Christ retains its value and virtue for ever. The things of this world, though precious, are perishing in their nature, and hence they are styled in the text corruptible. Every day diminishes their value, and in a very little time they shall be of no importance unto the possessor, for he can derive no benefit from them. Of what avail are riches and honours unto those who have parted with them for ever?—and of what importance will they in a very little while be unto those whose hearts are now set upon them? But though the value of all the precious things upon earth is fleeting and transitory, the worth of the precious blood of Christ is permanent and eternal; nay, its felt value and importance increase with time, and

will increase through eternity in the estimation of the redeemed. It is as precious unto them now as it was the first moment they fled unto it; nay, beholding their growing happiness flowing unto them through this channel, their sense of its value must be increasing, and must make the song they sing ever new, as it will be eternal!

3d. Are sinners, before they have interest in the redemption of Christ, involved in a state of the most grievous and disgraceful slavery?—then Christ redeems them from it by *the power of his grace, and the influences of his Holy Spirit*. This redemption, which he accomplishes by his power, is equally necessary with that which he effects by purchase. As sinners, the redeemed were not only in a state of condemnation, and exposed to the wrath of God, but they were also held in slavery by their spiritual enemies, who, after the price of their redemption was paid, refused to let them go. Nay, they had no inclination to accept of liberty, when in their offer; but, blinded by those who led them captive, they were in love with their chains. Christ, therefore, as the Redeemer of his people, binds the strong man armed, who kept them in miserable vassalage, and spoils him of his prey. He delivers them from the tyranny of Satan and the dominion of sin; he makes them willing in a day of his glorious power; he erects his throne in their hearts, establishes order and subordination among their faculties, and thus introduces them into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. The deliverance of ancient Israel from Egyptian bondage was but a faint emblem of this more glorious redemption of the Son of God. Now, it is only by the experience of this begun deliverance that the redeemed come to know their personal interest in this redemption. That Christ came into the

world to save sinners we learn from the Scriptures ; but it is only by experiencing the commencement of this salvation in our souls that we can ascertain our personal interest in it. The Son of God must make us free, before we know that we are free indeed. Like Peter, we must be brought out of prison, and feel that we are at liberty, in order to be assured that the deliverance is real and divine. How does the sick man know he is recovered, but by feeling ease and experiencing returning and increasing strength? and how comes the sinner to know that he has been delivered from the hand of his enemies, and from the power and dominion of sin, but by experiencing spiritual rest and holy liberty? Hence it is that the Apostle in the text addresses believers, to whom he wrote, as persons who knew they had been delivered from a vain conversation—who had been delivered not only from the foolish ceremonies imposed upon them by the tradition of the fathers, and from the grievous yoke of the ceremonial law, but who had, by the application of redemption unto their souls, been delivered from the hands of their spiritual enemies, that they might serve God in holiness and in righteousness all the days of their lives. What evidence can those persons have of interest in this redemption who are slaves to sin—who are conformed unto the corrupt manners and maxims of a present world, and who uniformly discover that vain conversation which springs from a vain and unrenewed heart? Of this deliverance all the redeemed have not equal experience, for sanctification is in different stages of advancement in different Christians ; yet every believer will experience something of this nature, and this experience, however small, will lead him to mourn over remaining corruption, to breathe after higher degrees of holiness and spiritual li-



berty, and to long for their perfection in the world above.

III. But this naturally brings me to the third and last thing proposed in the method; namely, to point out the *influence which the knowledge and belief of this redemption will have upon the hearts and lives of the redeemed in this world.*

1st. The knowledge and belief of this redemption will lead them to acknowledge and admire *the sovereignty and power of redeeming grace.* Redemption springs from sovereign grace, and is accomplished by almighty power. Why are sinful men redeemed, when sinning angels, beings of a superior nature, are allowed to perish? why doth the light of the gospel shine only upon a part of the human race? and why are its doctrines, even when they are preached, revealed unto babes, and concealed from the wise and prudent of this world? Our Saviour answers these questions, when rejoicing in spirit he said, “ Even so, Father, for so it hath seemed good in thy sight.” Whatever opposition, therefore, the doctrine of divine sovereignty may meet with from an ignorant unbelieving world, it will be readily acknowledged by the redeemed of the Lord, for they are living evidences of its truth. They will unite in gratefully acknowledging that by the grace of God they are what they are, and that this grace alone has made them to differ from the most wicked and worthless of the sons of men. They will acknowledge that sovereign grace found them out, and arrested them in their career of folly—that omnipotent grace raised them from death unto life—subdued their wills, overcame the enmity of their hearts, broke their chains, and introduced them into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Did

Israel admire the power and celebrate the praises of God in delivering them from Egyptian bondage, in dividing the sea and destroying their enemies?—did Peter acknowledge the exertion of divine power in opening the prison and setting him at liberty, saying, “the Lord hath sent his angel and delivered me?” and will not all who have been redeemed by Christ see and acknowledge the sovereignty and power of their illustrious Deliverer? Yes; with adoring wonder they will ascribe the glory of redemption to him while here—and through eternity on high they will sing and say, “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.”

2d. It will induce them to *live devoted unto the honour of their Redeemer*. Of this effect the Apostle takes notice, 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20, “Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” A sense of redeeming love shed abroad in the heart, is a powerful principle of universal holiness: “The love of Christ constraineth us,” said Paul, speaking in the name of the redeemed, “because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they who live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again.” This love takes hold of all the powers of the mind, and seizes upon every principle of action, and consecrates them all to the service and glory of the Redeemer. Truly, will they say, we are thy servants; for thou hast loosed our bonds,—thou hast delivered us out of the hands of our enemies, that we may serve thee in holiness and in righteousness all the days of our lives. Unto the laws of God

they pay a constant and cheerful obedience ; to the dispensations of providence they humbly submit ; for the honour of the Redeemer they are deeply concerned ; and the interests of his cause and kingdom they study to promote by every lawful means in their power. They aspire after progress in universal holiness, and study by grace to bring forth much fruit—not to justify their persons before God, but to glorify their Redeemer, to express their gratitude to God for redeeming grace, and to edify and profit their brethren of mankind. Will the doctrine of redemption, then, through the precious blood of Christ relax moral obligation, or injure the interests of morality ? or must it not strengthen the one and promote the other ? Yes ; this grace of God, bringing salvation, will effectually teach us to live soberly, righteously, and godly in a present evil world.

3d. It will induce them to be diligent in *promoting the salvation of others* ; especially of those with whom they are connected in life. Happy in the experience of begun redemption in their own souls, they will wish to impart the joys of this salvation to others around them. Genuine benevolence will fill their heart, and christian philanthropy will direct their conduct. Like the Apostle, they will no longer seek their own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. For the salvation of others, they will labour, and strive, and pray ; as to save a soul from death is, they know, a more noble achievement than to save a sinking nation, or to conquer the whole world. Although they will discover a concern for the salvation of all around, yet they will be principally concerned for the redemption of their kinsmen according to the flesh. Thus Abraham prayed God that Ishmael might live before him ; and Paul assures us, Rom. ix. 2, 3,



that he had great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart, for his brethren and kinsmen according to the flesh. As it seldom happens that all the relations of the redeemed discover a concern about salvation, (for the Lord takes two of a family and brings them to Zion) so, like Lot, they will be concerned for the salvation of their connections, and will endeavour to promote this important object to the utmost of their ability. Natural affection, uniting with christian benevolence, will render them tender and importunate, and engage them to seize every favourable opportunity, and to employ and improve every mean in their power. This concern for the salvation of others is peculiarly characteristic of the ransomed of the Lord; for to whatever delicate feeling or extensive benevolence others may pretend, they are incapable of this. For the salvation of others the redeemed alone are truly concerned, for they cannot be satisfied with relieving the temporal distresses of their fellow-men, but earnestly desire to be instrumental in bringing salvation unto perishing souls. Hence they are ever addressing a careless world, saying, "Come with us and we will do you good, for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel."

4th. It will fill them with *humility and holy joy*. Astonished at the riches of redeeming grace, and filled with a sense of their own unworthiness, they will exclaim, Lord, what are we that thou shouldest have brought us hitherto! what are we that thou shouldest have bestowed upon us the smallest favour! what are we that thou shouldest not have withheld from us the unspeakable gift of thy love! See this illustrated, Psalm cxliv. 1, 2, 3. "Blessed be the Lord my strength, my goodness, and my fortress, and my high tower; Lord, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him! or the

son of man, that thou makest account of him !” When they contemplate the greatness of this redemption and their own meanness, their souls will be filled with the deepest abasement. This humility will be accompanied with holy joy. Their souls with Mary’s will magnify the Lord, and their spirits will rejoice in God their Saviour, for he that is mighty hath done great things for them, and holy and reverend is his name. Their souls will boast in God, and they will be ready to say, “ Now we will praise the Lord, for, although he was once angry with us, his anger is turned away, and he comforteth us : behold, God is our salvation, we will trust and not be afraid ; the Lord Jehovah is our strength and our song ; he also is become our salvation.”

5th. It will induce them to a frequent and *devout commemoration of redeeming love*. Upon this love they will not only meditate with delight every day, and remember it more than wine, but every time they have a convenient opportunity, they will approach unto the table of the Lord, and over the sacred symbols of his broken body and shed blood, they will devoutly commemorate his dying love. Their frequency and delight in this service will bear proportion to the strength of the love they feel unto their divine Redeemer. Is it possible for a person to know that he is redeemed by the blood of Christ, and not to remember the death of his Redeemer, or to refuse to attend upon that ordinance which he has instituted to perpetuate its memory in the world, as well as to be the means of communicating spiritual strength and comfort unto his people ? Has he commanded all his disciples to do this in remembrance of him, and can the most extensive charity believe that those are among the redeemed of the Lord, who, instead

of attending upon this ordinance, either flee from the place where it is to be dispensed, or spend the day in indolence at home? Surely the love of Christ is not in the hearts of such persons, else it would lead them to keep this and all his other commandments. But while they conduct themselves in this manner, all who know that they have been redeemed by the Lord, will account it their duty, honour, and privilege to approach unto the altar of God, and while they draw nigh unto him will pray, "O send forth thy light and thy truth: then will we go unto the altar of God, unto God, our exceeding joy."

6th, and lastly. The knowledge of this redemption will induce the redeemed *to long for its perfection in heaven*. Born from above, their treasure, their hearts, and conversation are in heaven. As everything tends to its original, so they naturally desire their native country—that better country, that is an heavenly. There only they know their redemption shall be perfected. Though they have experienced the pleasure of a begun deliverance, yet still they groan under a body of sin and death, and are often made to exclaim, "O wretched men that we are, who shall deliver us?" This complaint, however, is not the expression of *despair*, but of *desire*; for they know that the day of their complete redemption draweth nigh. This day hath arisen upon them, and the sweetness of the morning dawn leads them earnestly to long for the perfect day. With strong desire, therefore, they expect that happy period when every remaining fetter shall be knocked off—when every interposing cloud shall be removed—when every defiling stain shall be taken away, and when they shall behold their Redeemer's face in righteousness, and be forever with the Lord. Particularly upon such an



occasion as this, when they may be blessed with sensible communion with the Lord, and when, as from Pisgah's top they are permitted to behold the beauty of the heavenly Canaan, they will feel these desires strong and ardent. Then they may be apt to adopt the language of the spouse, "O when will the day break and the shadows flee away: haste, my beloved, and be as a roe upon the mountains of separation!" But, hark! the Redeemer says unto such longing souls, "behold, I come quickly." Let them with joy reply, "Amen: even so come, Lord Jesus, come thou quickly." Amen.

## SERMON VI.

### CHRIST LOVED THE CHURCH AND GAVE HIMSELF FOR IT.

EPH. v. 25—27.

“ Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it ; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word ; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing ; but that it should be holy, and without blemish.”

OUR holy religion is distinguished, not only by the sublimity of its doctrines and the purity of its precepts, but by the simplicity of its ordinances, and the powerful peculiarity of the motives by which it enforces the practice of personal and social duties. These motives are in general drawn from the principles of the gospel, and are very powerful and persuasive with those who cordially embrace its doctrines. Accordingly, the Apostle having, in the preceding part of this epistle, established and illustrated some of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, proceeds, in the latter part of it, to enjoin upon those whom he addressed the practice of the personal and relative duties of life, and in doing so he directs their attention to the duties of husbands and wives. “ Wives,” says he, at the 22d verse, “ submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord ; for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church ; and he is the saviour of the body,” or the church : “ therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let wives be subject to their own husbands in every thing ;” and then he adds, in the words of our text, “ husbands, love your wives, even as Christ

also loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." It is our intention in this discourse,

I. To direct your attention to the special object of the Saviour's love—*the church*.

II. To consider the nature of his love to the church, and the manner in which he has manifested it: he loved the church, and gave himself for it.

III. The great and ultimate design he had in view: it was that he might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water and the word.

I. Let us consider the special object of the love of Christ—the church. The term church is used in different senses in the New Testament Scriptures. Sometimes it signifies a place appropriated to the service of God, and in which professing Christians meet to perform public worship, to hear religious instruction, and to celebrate the ordinances of their religion. In this sense it seems to be taken when the Apostle says, 1 Cor. xi. 22, "What! have ye not houses to eat and drink in? or despise ye the church of God?" But this, it is obvious, cannot be the meaning of the term in this passage. The term church is often used in the New Testament to signify the visible church, or a society of men who profess faith in Christ, and call him their Master and Lord. In this sense it is evidently taken when we read of the seven churches in Asia, of the churches in Galatia, and of the church in Corinth. But, as many of those who are externally connected with the visible church have no vital connexion with Jesus Christ, but are only nominal professors, calling



him Master and Lord, while they do not the things which he has commanded them, it is evident that this cannot be the meaning of the term in the passage now under our consideration; for then all professing Christians would be saved, which we know to be contrary to the express declaration of Christ himself. By the church here, then, we must understand the whole body of true believers, considered in their collective capacity, who have lived in the world, who are now alive, or who shall exist in it before the consummation of all things. These are styled by the Apostle, Heb. xii. 23, "the church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven." Now, this church of the first-born was chosen of God, and given to Christ, to be redeemed by his blood, sanctified by his Spirit, and saved by his grace. This is announced by the Apostle, Eph. i. 4, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." "Thine they were," says Christ, "and thou gavest them to me." This truth is taught us in the thirtieth verse of this chapter, though at first sight it may not be apparent to an ordinary reader. "For we," says the Apostle, (that is, we who are Christians) "are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Now, in reading this sentence, we must suppose that the word members governs the nouns, body, flesh, and bones, though how Christians are to be in any sense members of the body, flesh, and bones of Christ, is not easy to conceive; but if we read according to the original, the meaning will be plain and obvious. "For we are members of his body," (that is, of his church) "being out of his flesh and out of his bones," that is, being the fruit or purchase of his sufferings unto death, where

his flesh or body was broken for us, and his bones were all out of joint. Here, you will observe, there is an obvious reference to a remarkable fact recorded, Gen. ii. 21, "And the Lord caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib, which the Lord had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man." Now, as Eve, the spouse of Adam, was bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, so the church, the spouse of Christ, was the purchase of his death, or was bought by his blood; and if he had not thus redeemed them with his own most precious blood, he never would have had a church upon the earth. This church has various names by which she is designated in Scripture. She is styled his body, his ransomed people, his sanctified ones, and in Rev. xxi. 9, she is styled "the bride, the Lamb's wife." The true church of Christ, then, is composed of those who are redeemed by his blood, who believe in his name, who love him with supreme affection, and one another with pure hearts fervently, who yield a constant and cheerful obedience to all his commandments, who aspire after increasing personal purity, and who, being social in their dispositions, unite with their fellow Christians in the public worship of God, and in the devout and regular observance of all the institutions of the gospel. This church has existed in the world under different dispensations: she still continues to exist, and, being founded on a rock, her enemies shall never prevail against her, so as to overturn, extirpate, or destroy her. Though her members at times have been few, and even at

present are inconsiderable, when compared with the millions of human beings who inhabit our globe, yet she is evidently on the increase; her boundaries are enlarging, and will enlarge, until all the ends of the earth remember and turn unto the Lord—until men be blessed in him, and all nations call him blessed. And when at last all the members of this church are collected, they shall form a multitude which no man can number, redeemed unto God by the blood of the Lamb, and who shall unite in a new, triumphant, and harmonious song, ascribing their complete salvation to God and the Lamb, for ever and ever. Such, then, appears from Scripture to be the true church of Christ, the object of the Saviour's special love—not mankind in general—not all the members of the visible church, but those whom Christ styles his brethren, the members of his mystical body, who are united to him by the spirit of faith, who are under his protection and in his hands, and who hear his voice and follow him. These are the objects of his special regard, and for these, in his astonishing grace, he gave himself: and this naturally brings us to consider,

II. The nature of the Saviour's love unto his church, and the manner in which he has been pleased to express it.

He loved it, and he gave himself for it. The love of Christ unto his church is astonishing and incomprehensible, and fills the pious reflecting mind with wonder and admiration. It has a breadth and a length, a depth and a height, which pass our knowledge. Whether we think of the dignity of the Saviour's person as Immanuel, as God manifest in the flesh, or of the meanness and misery of those upon whom he was pleased to set his heart—or



whether we reflect upon the sufferings he endured in accomplishing the salvation of his people, and the invaluable blessings he procured for them, and bestows upon them, we must be struck with the greatness of his love, and in devout admiration exclaim, "Behold, what manner of love is this!" In the history of human affections we find nothing equal to it, or even like it. It is a love altogether singular and incomprehensible; for it is indeed marvellous, matchless love. It is free and generous, unmerited and unsolicited, and will be permanent, immutable, and everlasting. He loved his church with an everlasting love, and therefore with loving-kindness he draws them. When we love any object, it is because we see, or think we see something amiable and excellent in it; but when Christ loved his church, he loved them not because they were amiable and holy, for he saw them polluted in their blood, and yet his time was a time of love. If we love an unworthy object, it is in general only with a love of benevolence—of pity and compassion; and although Christ loves all men, even his enemies, with a love of benevolence, and accordingly wept over Jerusalem, saying, "oh, that thou hadst known in this thy day the things that belong to thy peace;" yet his love to his church and people is obviously something more than a love of mere benevolence—it is a peculiar and discriminating love—an ardent, an active, and laborious love—a love that will not cease to operate until it has effectually secured and finally accomplished the salvation and happiness of its objects. This love induced him to undertake their cause in the councils of heaven, to assume their nature, and to become their security and substitute. This love carried him through the whole of his sufferings—it did not leave him when he expired on the cross

and was laid in the tomb—it rose with him—it ascended into heaven with him—it animates him in his intercession at his Father's right hand, and it will bring him again to this world to raise them from the dead, to acknowledge them as his people, and to carry them in triumph with himself into the heavenly world, to enjoy the happiness which is prepared for them. When the love of Christ, then, to his church is compared with the love which any creature shows to another, it rises infinitely above it, and appears to be transcendent, and matchless, and divine. “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man should lay down his life for his friend; but Christ hath commended his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners and enemies, he died for us.” And this naturally leads us to consider the manner in which Christ has manifested his love to his church and people. He loved them and gave himself for them. The Apostle does not say to what he gave himself for them, because he had expressed his meaning more fully and decidedly in the second verse of this chapter, where he said, “Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.” If Christ had not given himself as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of his church and people, his love to them would have been ineffectual for securing their salvation; for he could only save them from their sins by expiating their guilt. Under the law, or legal dispensation, without the shedding of blood there was no remission; and under the gospel dispensation, moral delinquency must be expiated by nobler blood than the blood of animal sacrifices; for it is not possible, the Apostle assures us, that the blood of bulls or of goats could take away sin. Accordingly, when

sacrifices and offerings were of no avail—when no man could redeem himself, or give unto God a ransom for his brother, Christ said, “Lo ! I come : to do thy will, O my God, I take delight. Let a body, or human nature, be prepared for me, that I may have a right to the redemption, and a ransom to pay ; and rather than these my people should perish, I will give myself a ransom for them, or an atoning sacrifice for their sins, that they may have redemption through my blood.” Sacrifices, we find, were instituted by God immediately after the fall, and were offered in faith by his believing people, as typical of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This atonement or expiation was also predicted by the ancient prophets, who had foretold that Messiah should be cut off, but not for himself ; that he should finish transgression, make an end of sin-offering, and make reconciliation for iniquity ; and we know from Heb. ii. 17, that these predictions were fulfilled in the reconciliation or atonement which he made for the sins of the people, and which it behoved him to make in consequence of his own voluntary engagements. Some who believe the doctrine of atonement affirm, that the justice of God did not require this expiation, and that, if he had pleased, he might have conferred pardon and eternal life upon sinners of our fallen race without any satisfaction to his justice. It surely does not become us to say what God could or could not do ; but we may certainly reason in the most conclusive manner from what God has done, in as much as whatever he does is done in the wisest and best manner, and by the wisest and best means, for accomplishing the end he has in view. Since God appointed the atonement to be made by Christ as the surety and substitute of his people, and accepted of it when it was presented,



we may certainly conclude that it was necessary; for if it had not been requisite, and if some other mode would have been equally wise and effectual, he certainly would have spared his own Son the agonies of Gethsemane, the indignities of the judgment-hall, and the sufferings of the cross. Besides, it is a fact that our Saviour prayed repeatedly and earnestly that, if it were possible, the cup might pass from him; and as we know it did not pass, may we not conclude that it was not consistent with the purposes of Jehovah that it should pass, but that it behoved Christ to suffer before he could enter into his glory as the living Head of his church—or, in other words, that it was necessary that atonement should be made by his death before the sins of his people could be remitted, in full consistency with the glory of God, the requirements of his laws, and the equity of his moral government. Yes! it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. Accordingly, Christ has manifested his astonishing love for his church and people by becoming their surety—by taking their sins upon him, and by bearing them in his own body upon the tree, that he might expiate their guilt, procure their remission, reconcile them to God, and that they might have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace. This important and fundamental truth of the gospel, is so frequently and unequivocally expressed both in the Old and New Testament Scriptures, that it will not be denied by any humble and candid inquirer after the truth as it is in Jesus. Is. liii. 5—“He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for

our iniquities : the chastisement of our peace was upon him ; and with his stripes we are healed. The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all ; for the transgression of my people was he stricken." Christ himself declares, that he came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many, and that he is the good shepherd who giveth his life for the sheep. John the Baptist says, " Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." The Apostle Paul declares, 1 Cor. xv. 3, " I delivered unto you first of all, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures ;" for, 2 Cor. v. 21, " he hath made him to be sin," a sin-offering, " for us, who knew no sin ; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." The Apostle Peter declares, 1 Pet. ii. 24, and iii. 18, " who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness : and by whose stripes ye are healed : for he suffered, the just for us the unjust, that he might bring us to God." All his people, therefore, are redeemed unto God by his blood ; for he hath loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood, and they shall reign with him for ever and ever. Though there is infinite merit in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and it is sufficient to expiate the guilt of the whole world, and to procure salvation to all mankind, had they been all given unto him, or would they all come unto him ; and although upon the ground of this sufficiency of merit, the gospel is preached unto all indiscriminately, and all are invited, nay commanded, to believe in the Saviour set before them ; yet, from the connection in which the death of Christ is introduced in this passage, and the express declaration that he loved the

church and gave himself for it, we must conclude that in whatever sense he may be said to have died for all, or given himself a ransom for all, that it was his *special purpose* and his *gracious design* to save, by his death, *his own sheep*, who were given to him by the Father. Objections may be raised and urged against this doctrine, as apparently at variance with human liberty and moral responsibility. But, although we may be unable to show how a limited purpose on the part of God is consistent with an unlimited proclamation of mercy unto all who hear the gospel; yet they must be consistent, since they are both expressly ascribed to him in Sacred Scripture. Cyrus issued a proclamation, permitting all the Jews to return to their own country, and to rebuild their temple at Jerusalem; yet none of them returned or availed themselves of the liberty that was given them, except those whose hearts the Lord had touched, or inclined to return. And in like manner the gospel is preached unto all, proclaiming liberty, and offering salvation to all through the atoning death of Christ, because that death is sufficient to procure salvation unto all, if they will believe in it, and apply it; but at same time it will be efficient or saving to none, except to those whose hearts the Lord touches, and who are made willing on a day of divine power to believe through grace; for by grace we are saved through faith, and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God. We now proceed,

III. To consider the ultimate design which Christ had in view in loving his church and giving himself for it: it was that he might *sanctify and cleanse it* by the washing of water by the word. These words may be rendered, "that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it through the washing



of water by the word." Christ Jesus gave himself for the church, not only that he might expiate their guilt, and justify them through faith in his blood, but that he might also sanctify them by the agency of the Holy Spirit, through the instrumentality of the word. "He gave himself for them, that he might redeem them from all iniquity, and purify them unto himself, a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Having received them, selected by the Father from the common mass of mankind, and being resolved finally to present them to himself, a glorious church, free from every defilement, it was necessary that the Spirit should be sent into their hearts, to deliver them from the power and pollution of sin, to form them into a resemblance of the divine image, and to make them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. But if Christ had not laid down his life a sacrifice for sin, to remove their guilt, and procure the influences of the Holy Spirit, no real personal holiness would have been possessed by any of our ruined race. In this case it would have been as inconsistent with the character and perfections of God to give his Holy Spirit to sanctify sinners, as it would have been to pardon their iniquities, or to bestow upon them any spiritual blessing. It is through Jesus Christ, as our great atoning High Priest, that we receive every blessing, and among the rest, the Holy Spirit, to produce personal purity, for he is made of God unto us sanctification. If Christ had not died and gone to heaven in virtue of his atonement, the Comforter, or the Holy Spirit, would not have come to his people, to abide with them for ever. Accordingly it is remarkable, that, after the sacrifice of Christ had been presented and accepted, and he had gone to heaven, the Spirit was poured out in accordance with his promise, in consequence of which, Jews and Gen-

tiles were converted unto the Lord. The great design of Christ, then, in giving himself for the church, was to sanctify it, or to cleanse it through the washing of water by the word. Now, let it be borne in mind that in Sacred Scripture the purifying influences of the Spirit are frequently represented by the cleansing efficacy of water; for as this element, when applied to the body, removes defilement from it, so the Spirit by the word removes the moral pollution of sin from the soul. Hence it is promised, Ez. xxxvi. 25, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you." And again, Is. xliv. 3, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground:" which is explained by what follows—"I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." Christ Jesus therefore cleanses his church by the purifying influences of his Holy Spirit, or by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. This almighty agent by his powerful energy subdues and mortifies corrupt principles and unholy tempers, and implants and cherishes pious feelings and holy dispositions. But while the Spirit is the great agent in beginning and carrying on the work of sanctification, the word, either read or heard, is the grand instrument by which he operates, and through which it is effected. This word is not only holy in its nature, but, when believed and felt, is the means of promoting personal holiness; for it works effectually in those who believe. They are cast into the mould of gospel truth; its holy principles sink into their hearts, and purify their temper and conduct; and thus, in fact, they are sanctified by the same faith by which they are justified. "Now ye are clean," said Christ to his disciples, "through the word

which I have spoken unto you," John xv. 3 ; and in his prayer to his Father for them, he says, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth," John xvii. 17. The more carefully and constantly Christians consult the word of God, and the more regularly and attentively they hear it, when plainly and purely preached, the greater shall be their progress in personal and universal holiness. Though we may profess to believe the great truths of the word of God, and yet remain under the power and continue in the practice of sin ; yet we cannot cordially embrace the doctrines of the cross, without being crucified to the world, and the world crucified to us, or without feeling the power of sin subdued in our souls. When we are convinced of our sin and sinfulness, when we receive the atonement, and rest upon Christ and the work he finished on the cross, for pardon and acceptance with God, we obtain such discoveries of the evil of sin, the love of the Saviour, and the vanity of this world and all its enjoyments, and the value of the world to come, as lead us to loathe and leave all sin, to love the Saviour with supreme affection, and to mortify the deeds of the body, that we may live. Our old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin in us may be destroyed, and that henceforth we may not serve sin. Being made free from sin, we become the servants of righteousness—have our fruit unto holiness, and our end everlasting life.

But the great design of Christ in loving the church and giving himself for it, was not only to sanctify it, having cleansed it through the washing of water by the word, but that ultimately he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing ; and that it should be holy and without blame. This language



obviously alludes to a practice which prevailed among the Jews and some other eastern nations, of espousing virgins to their husbands before they were actually presented to them, and the marriage ceremony was consummated. Now, in reference to this custom, the Scriptures represent the progressive improvement of Christians in personal holiness, and their advancement to spiritual maturity, as preparatory to their final presentation to Christ Jesus, as their Head and Husband. When Christians at first embrace the Saviour, and devote themselves to him as their Lord, they are said to be *espoused* to him ; and, accordingly, the Apostle (in his first Epistle to the Corinthians) says, of the Christians at Corinth, “ I have espoused you to one husband, that ye may be presented as a chaste virgin to Christ.” The work of preparing the bride for her husband, and the honour of presenting her to him, belonged to the parent, if alive ; but as the church, in her natural estate, is destitute and helpless, so the work of preparation and presentation devolves upon Christ, who must therefore first prepare her, and then present her to himself, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. While the church is in this world, she is in a state of imperfection—she has her spots, blemishes, and wrinkles. These stain her purity, detract from her beauty, indicate her weakness, or spiritual decay. These are spots, however, which differ from those spots that mark the character of the wicked and ungodly ; for she is free from ruinous error in principle, from habitual sin in practice, and final impenitence, or total apostacy, for these are not the spots of the people of God. But still she has her spots and wrinkles ; she is not entirely free from sin ; for there is not a just man upon the earth, who doeth good, and sinneth

not. She feels remaining depravity, or a law in her members warring against the law of her mind, and bringing her into captivity to the law of sin and death; she is subject to occasional languor and spiritual declension, to a losing of her first love and zeal when the things which remain languish, and seem ready to die. There is still some darkness in her understanding, and some depravity in her heart, and she is sensible that she has not attained nor is already perfect. But when she is to be presented to Christ, she shall be entirely free from sin—from every infirmity and defect—from all error in principle or aberration in practice—from every thing which can impair her spiritual beauty, or detract from her moral excellence. But she is not only to be presented to Christ free from every imperfection, but in the beauty of perfect holiness; she is to be presented absolutely immaculate in body and in soul, and exhibiting no blemish to the eyes of him who is the Judge, and the standard of moral excellence; for she shall see him as he is, and be like unto him. She shall then appear to be a glorious church—more glorious than the sun itself, which we know has its spots. She shall then appear to be a countless multitude, a number which no man can number—glorious in body, being fashioned like unto the glorious body of Christ—glorious in spirit, by having the image of God completely and perfectly restored—glorious in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, having no remaining darkness in their minds, or enmity in their hearts; but being all glorious within and without, and shining with a radiance which would eclipse the brightness of a thousand suns. Then every individual believer shall shine forth in the kingdom of his Father, as the sun in his brightness; and if each one then shall shine as a sun, what

must be the splendour of the collected, concentrated glories of innumerable millions of the redeemed, when presented to Christ, and through him to the Father in the heavenly world! Then the church, glorious within and without, shall be brought into the palace of the King, and there she shall for ever abide, reflecting the glory of her exalted Lord, enjoying a constant sense of his love, and employed in celebrating his praise without weariness, interruption, or termination!

In conclusion, you may learn from this subject, that although it is proper, and even necessary, that you should be connected with some visible church, some society of professing Christians, that you may observe the ordinances of our holy religion, and enjoy the external privileges of the gospel; yet you must not be satisfied, as too many are, with this outward connection, as affording undoubted evidence of being in Christ Jesus, and being members of his mystical body—the church. Remember that as, under the ancient dispensation, they were not all Israel who were of Israel, so under the gospel dispensation, they are not all Christians who call themselves Christians, and are called such by others. Inquire earnestly, therefore, if you are indeed the living members of the true church of Christ—if you have been renovated by the Spirit—if you do believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as your righteousness and strength, and rest on him alone for salvation—if you love him with supreme affection, and one another with pure hearts fervently; and if you demonstrate the reality of your faith and love by your cheerful, constant, and universal obedience; for you are the friends of Christ if you do whatsoever he hath commanded you.

Let us admire the astonishing love of Christ in giving himself for his church and people, and



remember it with every grateful emotion, that it may ever be present to our minds, and produce a purifying practical influence upon our dispositions and deportment. It is a love which deserves to be held in grateful and everlasting remembrance. It has been remembered in the church from the beginning of the christian era; it is now remembered by all the faithful upon this earth, and it is never forgotten by the redeemed in heaven. But our Saviour knew how apt his own disciples were to allow his marvellous love to slip out of their mind, and in condescension to their weakness was pleased to institute the solemn ordinance we are this day met to celebrate, and says to all his true disciples, as he said to his immediate followers, while he dispensed it to them, "This do in remembrance of me." From a regard to his authority, then, and from love to him as their Lord, let Christians this day go to a communion table to profess their faith in him, and attachment to him, to feed upon him, and the blessings of his purchase, and to dedicate themselves to him as his redeemed property—to be his wholly, only, and for ever.

Finally, since it was the great design of Christ in giving himself for the church to sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, let it be our great design, and constant desire and endeavour, in dependence on divine grace, and the supplies of the Spirit, to be improving in personal purity. Having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and be perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Though the sanctification and preparation of the church for her final presentation be the work of Christ, for he is made of God unto his people sanctification, yet it is also said, Rev. xix. 7,

that "the Lamb's wife hath made herself ready," namely, by attending to all the means of spiritual improvement which the Lord hath appointed, and blesses for this important purpose. While it is God that worketh in us, both to will and to work, we must, as Christians strengthened by divine grace, work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. Instead of imagining we have already attained, either are already perfect, let us forget those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

## SERMON VII.

### THE BREADTH, LENGTH, DEPTH AND HEIGHT OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST.

EPH. iii. 18, 19.

“ That ye may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height ; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.”

WHEN the gospel of Christ is believed and felt, it inspires the mind with universal benevolence. It not only leads real Christians to wish well unto all men, and to endeavour to promote their temporal and spiritual interests by every lawful mean in their power, but it induces them in a peculiar manner to express their love unto the brethren, in fervent prayer for their progressive improvement and growing experience of the power and comforts of the gospel. But while this desire will be discovered by all real Christians, it will especially be manifested by those who hold public stations in the church, and who are called to preach the gospel to their brethren of mankind. Accordingly, we see this amiable spirit displayed by the Apostle in the context. Having unfolded to the Ephesians the mystery which was hid from ages and generations, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs and of the same body, and partakers of the promises in Christ by the gospel, he shows them that believers under the gospel dispensation have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Christ. He assures them that he was careful to improve this privilege upon their account, by remembering them in his prayers to the Father of all ; and mentions



a part of the fervent, comprehensive request which he offered on their behalf. "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith;" and then he adds in the words of our text, "that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend," or rather, according to the original, "that ye may be able to apprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." As we are this day met together for the solemn purpose of commemorating the love of Christ in dying for his people, we hope these words will afford us a suitable subject for meditation; and, in farther discoursing from them, all that we propose is, to make a few observations upon the different dimensions of the love of Christ enumerated by the Apostle; and then to conclude with an improvement of the subject.

Following the order adopted by the Apostle, let us first make a few observations upon the *breadth of the love of Christ*. The love of Christ will appear to be possessed of this property, if we consider the vast variety of persons which it embraces, and the numerous and precious blessings which it bestows. The love of Christ in its breadth extends to all nations upon the face of the earth. God, we are assured in Scripture, hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth. As all men, therefore, are of one common nature—as they are children of the same parent, and members of the same family, they ought to love one another, and

to promote one another's interest by every means in their power. Our love to our fellow-creatures, however, is often narrowed by national distinction, by local circumstances, by party partial views, or personal connection. We find it difficult at times to rise above these, and to extend our regards, as Christians ought to do, to men of all nations. While our love, however, is thus confined by national distinction, by local situation, or private attachment, the love of Christ knows no such limits; but rising above all these in a glorious, god-like manner, it extends its influence to men of all nations upon the face of the earth. It is true, indeed, divine revelation was for some time confined to one favourite nation. To preserve the knowledge of himself in the world, God was pleased to select that nation, and to commit to them the oracles of divine truth; but when the purposes of heaven with respect to this highly favoured nation were accomplished—when the gospel morn began to dawn, every national distinction was abolished, and the Apostles were commanded to go into all nations, and to preach the gospel to every creature. The diffusion of the truth, at first rapid and extensive, has indeed for some time been slow and almost imperceptible; but, though thus slow and silent, it is sure and progressive; for men may as soon arrest the sun in his course, or prevent him from illuminating every region upon the face of the earth, as they may prevent, by all their efforts, the universal spread of gospel light. Christ is given to be a light to enlighten the Gentiles, and to be God's salvation unto the ends of the earth. The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the tops of the mountains, and all nations shall flow into it; "for it shall come to pass," saith the Lord, "that I will gather all nations and tongues, and they shall come and behold my

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glory. He shall say to the north, give up, and to the south, keep not back, bring my sons from afar, and my daughters from the ends of the earth." Men, therefore, of every kingdom and kindred, of every tongue and tribe, shall feel the influence of the love of Christ, for men shall be blessed in him, and all nations shall call him blessed. Farther, the breadth of the love of Christ appears in its extending to persons of all ranks and denominations. In every well regulated country, there are distinctions which, like the inequalities or gentle swellings upon the surface of the earth, instead of deforming the face of civil society, add to its beauty and promote its interest. The difference of rank, however, which obtains in civilised life, is rather to be considered as an useful temporary distinction, than as forming any real difference among the sons of men. At same time, our love is extremely apt to be limited by these distinctions, and to be confined chiefly to persons who move in our own sphere. But the love of Christ knows no such distinction. It reaches to persons in every condition in life—to the high and the low—the rich and the poor—the learned and the ignorant—the young and the old. It is true, indeed, not many wise men after the flesh, not many rich, not many noble are called. Yet these are by no means excluded from feeling the influence and enjoying the comforts of the love of Christ. We have several instances in Scripture of exalted station, connected with exalted piety, and of great wealth, united with real religion and devotedness to the service of God. Abraham and Job, David and Joseph of Arimathea, will readily occur to those who are conversant with the Bible, and, blessed be God! we have even in our own times some amiable examples of the union of rank and



riches with real religion, and the felt influence of the love of Christ. This love also reaches to the poor and needy—to men in the lowest walks of life, and raises them to the high honour of being the sons of God, and heirs of that kingdom which shall never be moved. Thus the love of Christ extends to persons of every condition, and brings some of every order and denomination under its sovereign and saving influence. This love also extends in its breadth to sinners of every class and character. Though all men by nature and practice are sinners, yet it is evident that some are more guilty than others. They have entered earlier upon the ways of vice, or continued longer in the practice of iniquity. Their sins have been attended with peculiar aggravations, for they have sinned exceedingly before the Lord. Now, it might be imagined, that if the love of Christ were to extend to any of the human race, it would reach only to those who are of decent character, or who are comparatively innocent; but that great offenders would be excluded from sharing in its saving influence. The love of Christ is so broad, however, that it extends to sinners of every description. None are excluded, that none may despair. It has already selected and saved the chief of sinners, that the chief of sinners may have hope of salvation. Thus, we find a Manasseh, an idolater and murderer, who made the streets of Jerusalem stream with innocent blood, humbled and pardoned; Paul too, a blasphemer and persecutor, is brought under the constraining influence of this love; and many of the Corinthians, who were the scandal of their country, and a disgrace to human nature, were washed and justified, and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of the living God. The

breadth of the love of Christ appears, moreover, in the numerous and precious blessings which it confers. This love bestows not one or two, but all the blessings of the new and everlasting covenant. Hence, we find the Apostle, when praising God in the beginning of this epistle, saying, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus." These blessings, indeed, are all inseparably connected with each other, and are all absolutely necessary to perfect the happiness of believers. The love of Christ, therefore, combines these blessings, and confers them all upon true believers. It not only bestows upon them the pardon of their sins and the sanctification of their natures, but it brings them direction in difficulty, consolation in sorrow, strength in weakness, and grace to help them in time of need. As all the blessings of the covenant are the purchase of the Saviour's blood, and secured to his people by his faithful promise, so they shall all be conferred upon them by their living and loving Lord. Were any one of these blessings to be withheld, their happiness would be incomplete; but his glorious love confers them all upon them, and will not give them the half, but the whole of the kingdom. Christ is made unto all his people wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption; for, Rom. viii. 30, "whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

2d. We now proceed to make a few observations upon the *length of the love of Christ*. When the term length is applied to any solid body, it signifies extension from one end to another; but when used as in the passage before us to describe any disposition of heart, it signifies extent of dura-

tion. Now, in contemplating the length of the love of Christ as represented to us in Scripture, we find it rising from an eternity past, running through the whole of time, and reaching to an eternity to come. The love of Christ, as described in Scripture, rises from an eternity past. The love which any creature discovers to another, must be, like its nature, limited in its duration. It can be traced to the first moment when it arose in the heart, and it can be frequently followed to its extinction in the soul. Like a river, we can trace it to its source; and, like a river too, we can see its termination. But the love of Christ unto his people, is, like himself, everlasting. This truth is frequently taught in Sacred Scripture. Thus, Christ, when speaking of himself as the wisdom of God, says, Prov. viii. 23, "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was;" verses 30, 31—"Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men." Jer. xxxi. 3—"The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." Hence, we are expressly assured, that grace was given unto us in Christ Jesus before the world was. Now, if Christ existed as the Son of God from eternity, if he was in the beginning with God, and was God, and if he was set up as Mediator from everlasting, as Scripture declares, then it is evident that his love unto his people must have been from everlasting. This love did not commence with his appearance in this world; for that appearance was the effect of his precious love and agreement to undertake our cause. If Christ, indeed, had no existence prior to his ap-



pearance in this world, as some suppose, then his love may be easily traced to its origin, for, upon this principle, it only commenced about eighteen hundred years ago; but if Christ existed before he came into this world, and if his goings have been of old from everlasting, then his love must be also from everlasting. Thus, you see that our views of the length of the love of Christ are inseparably connected with our views of his person. If we degrade the dignity of his person, and deny his divinity, we virtually degrade and deny the wonders of his love; but as Christ Jesus existed as the Son of God from eternity, and is immutable, it is evident that his love must be from everlasting, and that in tracing its amazing length, we are lost in an eternity past. The love of Christ too, in its length, reaches through the whole of time. With time it begins to appear and to challenge our attention. It appeared in the first promise, not long after time began to roll, and it has kept pace with its progress ever since. It was but faintly discerned, under the ancient dispensation, through the veil of type and figure; but now, under the gospel dispensation, it appears like a mighty river in full view, and runs on with a majestic current. It has been felt by the people of God in all ages, and it will continue to be enjoyed by them while they remain in the world; for as it runs through the whole of time, so it flows through the whole of a believer's life-time in the world. Every real Christian is interested in this love, and cannot be separated from it; for Christ having loved his own, that are in the world, loves them unto the end. Though, upon account of their sins, Christians may incur his displeasure, and be exposed to his fatherly chastisements, yet these corrections, so far from being inconsistent with this love, are in reality the

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fruit and expression of it; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. Ps. lxxxix. 30—34—“If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.” As this love is sovereign in its nature, so it must be immutable; and if the sins of the people of God, though foreseen, did not prevent his setting his love upon them, so, when committed, they will not be able entirely to deprive them of it. They may lose, indeed, all comfortable sense of this love for a season; but even then it is really following them, and will at last appear. It accompanies them through the whole of life—it follows them as the water did Israel through the desert, and it will not desert them when they enter the dark and silent valley of the shadow of death. A stream of this love runs through that valley, and will carry them on its course to the inheritance of the saints in light. Hence the Apostle exclaims, Rom. viii. 35, 38, 39, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” This love, therefore, will be eternal. As Christ will exist for ever in the heavenly world, so he will never cease to love his people. His love having followed them through life, and accompanied them through the valley of death, will enter heaven with them, and attend them for ever and ever; “for the mercy of the Lord,”

says the Psalmist, "is from everlasting to everlasting." It rose in the heart of Christ from an eternity past, it has flowed on during the whole of time, and, instead of terminating with its duration, it will enter eternity and flow on through all the interminable periods of an endless duration. Thus, we see that the length of the love of Christ is immeasurable—its expansion is infinite. We can neither trace it to its origin nor termination. It stretches on each hand of us, until we lose ourselves in the contemplation, and can only stand and wonder at its infinite extent. It is ancient love, it is present precious love, and it will be everlasting love—permanent in its duration, and ever-growing in its felt value and importance.

3d. We now come forward, in the third place, to make a few observations upon the *depth of the love of Christ*. The depth of anything properly signifies its measure from top to bottom, and is generally applied to the liquid bodies—to rivers, or the mighty ocean. When applied to the love of Christ, it is descriptive of its strength, and leads us to contemplate his astonishing humiliation. The depth of the love of Christ must be estimated from the dignity of his person, and the sufferings to which he submitted in accomplishing our redemption. Christ Jesus, in the dignity of his person, is exalted above our highest conceptions. He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, upholding all things by the word of his power. He is infinitely exalted above the highest angels, having, by inheritance, a more excellent name than they; and when he is brought, as the only begotten Son, into this world, all the angels of God are commanded to worship him. By the Father himself, he is expressly styled *God*. Heb. i. 8—"But



unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." That a person of such dignity and excellence should discover love to any of the sons of men, is truly astonishing; but that he should have expressed this love unto them in the manner he did, is, if possible, still more wonderful. He assumes our nature into personal union with the divine. This is the first and longest, though not the lowest, step of his humiliation. He assumes this nature, too, not while possessed of its original beauty and excellence, but with all the infirmities arising from the introduction of sin. He does not appear in royal splendour, or princely greatness, but in meanness and in poverty. He is born in a stable, and laid in a manger. His innocence and infancy do not protect him from the cruelty of man; for to save his life from the designs of a tyrant, his parents are forced to flee with him into lonely exile. For a long period after his return, he submitted, in obscurity, to poverty, to labour, and contempt. When he entered upon his public ministry, his sufferings became more apparent and remarkable; for although during the whole of life he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, yet his sufferings gradually increased, they deepened as they flowed, until at last they seemed altogether to overwhelm him. When about to enter upon his work, he is assaulted and harassed by the powers of darkness, and tempted to the commission of the most grievous sins. Through the whole course of his ministry, he struggled with poverty and persecution, with contumely and reproach. His doctrines are derided, his character is traduced, and even his miracles of mercy ascribed to the influence of the prince of darkness. Towards the close of his life, however, a tremendous

scene of sufferings is opened to our view, for then he is brought into deep waters. He is betrayed by one of his disciples into the hand of his enemies, denied by another, and deserted by them all. He is apprehended, bound, and led away as a criminal from Gethsemane to Jerusalem. He is dragged from one part of the city to another, and from one unjust and insolent tribunal to another. He is insulted and buffeted—he is spit upon and scourged—he is crowned with thorns, loaded with his cross, and led away to be crucified with every mark of ignominy and insolence. But although his bodily sufferings were great and acute, the anguish of his soul was still more deep and distressing. He said unto his disciples, while there appeared no outward cause for his sufferings, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death.” In his mysterious agony in the garden, his mental distress was so great, that his sweat was like great drops of blood falling down unto the ground. Thrice he prayed that if it were possible this cup might pass from him; adding, however, with calm resignation, “not my will, but thine be done.” On the cross, while bearing the punishment due to our offences, and making his soul an offering for sin, he cried out, even in the presence of his enemies, “My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?” In his person he was still beloved of the Father, but as the surety of his people he was bearing their sins in his own body on the tree, for it pleased the Father to bruise him. Thus the cruelty of man, and the malice of devils, but above all what he suffered from the hand of his heavenly Father, as the great Judge of all, combined to sink him in an inconceivable abyss of suffering, and to bring him to the dust of death. Well might he adopt the language of ancient prophecy,

and say, "Behold and see, all ye that pass by, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing, for deep calleth unto deep, and all thy billows are gone over me. I am a reproach of men, and despised of the people. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to those that plucked off the hair. I hid not my face from shame and spitting. The plowers plowed upon my back; they made long their furrows. In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink; they pierced my hands and my feet. My strength is dried like a potsherd, my tongue cleaveth to my jaws, and thou hast brought me to the dust of death." What an astonishing humiliation! what depth of love is here! The most exalted greatness in the lowest abasement, perfect innocence overwhelmed with suffering, and the Prince of life expiring upon the cross, and descending to the silent grave, to save sinners from everlasting misery. The depth of the love of Christ appears in bringing him who thought it no robbery to be equal with God, into the lowest state of abasement, to raise us who were wretched sinners from an abyss of sin and misery. We were sunk in a horrible pit, and in the miry clay, but this love stoops to raise us from this pit, and to rescue us from everlasting destruction. The depth of the love of Christ corresponds to the depth of our misery—it meets and relieves it. The dignity of the Saviour's person, and the depth of his sufferings, show the amazing strength of his love. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, although he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend; but herein hath God commended his love towards us, in that



while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." An exalted prince enduring the greatest sufferings for the deliverance of rebels against his father's government from destruction, would manifest a wonderful love—such love as the world never beheld. But even such love cannot be compared with the love of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in dying upon the cross for the salvation of perishing sinners; for his love in so doing is a love the depth of which has filled heaven itself with wonder. Angels viewed it with astonishment, and it confounded the deeps of Satan, for it overturned the foundations of his kingdom. How amazing the condescension of the Son of God! how astonishing the greatness of the love of Jesus! The dignity of his person, and the degradation and disgrace to which he submitted, are equally beyond our finite comprehension. Our love to our friends is at the best but a shallow stream; it can do or endure but little; but his love to his enemies is an unfathomable ocean. While we stand and contemplate its depth, it overwhelms the mind, and leads us to exclaim, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! What manner of love is this, that he who was in the form of God, and who thought it no robbery to be equal with God, should make himself of no reputation, and take upon him the form of a servant, and be made in the likeness of men; and that, being found in fashion as a man, he should humble himself, and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross!"

4th, We now proceed, in the fourth and last place, to make a few observations upon *the height of the love of Christ*. The height of any object is its elevation above the surface of the ground, and the idea naturally leads us to contemplate

the love of Christ, as manifested to his people after his resurrection and ascension into the heavenly world. We have just now been considering the depth of that love which he discovered in his humiliation, sufferings, and death; and now we are to contemplate the height of this love, in his resurrection and ascension into heaven. The height of this love appeared in its rising again with him from the grave. The coldness of the tomb could not damp the ardour of his affection. Accordingly, after his resurrection, we find him discovering the same love unto his disciples which he had manifested before his death. He sends a particular message to Peter, who had denied him, to remove his fears, and to show him that he was still the object of his tender regard. He frequently met with his disciples, and freely conversed with them, instructing them in things which pertained to the kingdom of God. When the time came that he must ascend into heaven, he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifted up his hands and blessed them. His love did not leave him when he left this earth; it ascended with him into heaven; for in his glorious state of exaltation he still continues to love his people. As he loved them upon this earth in his lowest state of abasement, so he loves them in heaven in his highest state of exaltation. The glory of his exalted station does not in the smallest degree diminish the strength and ardour of his love. Though when men in this world are raised to dignified situations, to places of power and honour, they sometimes forget those they professed to esteem or promised to serve; yet this is not the character of our exalted Redeemer. His love to his people is so high and ardent, that amid all the splendours of the celestial world he is still mindful of them and of their concerns. Their names are

written upon the palms of his hands, their walls are continually before him, and he employs his power and influence in promoting their interests, and in perfecting their salvation. Nay, even in heaven he sympathizes with them in all their sorrows, he intercedes for them at his Father's right hand, and is as mindful of their concerns as if they were his own. When we look up, then, to the Redeemer, now upon his throne, and still loving his people, we must be struck with the height of the Saviour's love—a love displayed in the highest heaven, and in the highest manner. Like the ladder in Jacob's vision, while its foot is on the earth, its top reaches unto heaven, and keeps open a communication between both. This leads us to observe farther that the height of the love of Christ appears in his conferring, in his exalted state, the highest and most important gifts upon his people. When he ascended up on high he led captivity captive, and received gifts for men. As he received those gifts to bestow upon his people, so the Apostle Paul, when quoting this prophecy, explains his receiving by his giving, saying, "and he gave gifts to men." These gifts were various and valuable, but there are two of them so important that they deserve to be distinctly mentioned. These are the gifts of the Spirit and a gospel ministry. "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come; but if I go away, I will send him unto you." Now, though Christ sent the Spirit in his miraculous gifts to the primitive Christians, to accomplish the extraordinary purposes he then had in view, yet he still continues to send him in his ordinary influences upon his people, for he comes to abide with them for ever. The gift of a gospel ministry, also, is another precious gift which the height of the Redeemer's love be-



stows upon his people. Eph. iv. 11, 12—“ He gave some, apostles ; and some, prophets ; and some, evangelists ; and some, pastors and teachers ; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” Now, how high is that love which bestows upon the unworthy such precious gifts ! When we confer favours, we bestow them upon the deserving, upon those who have served us, and who merit some acknowledgment ; but as Christ bestows these favours upon the unworthy, nay, upon the rebellious, and bestows them, too, from heaven, they display the astonishing height of his love. We may observe still farther that the height of the love of Christ appears in his raising his people even now in this world to the honour of being the sons of God, and giving them a right and title to the heavenly inheritance. John i. 12—“ To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” He not only introduces them into the family of God, but raises them to the honour of being kings and priests unto God, even in this world. In virtue of his right to the heavenly inheritance, and by his resurrection from the dead as the head of his people, they are begotten again to the living hope of an inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled, and which fadeth not away. David accounted it an honour to be son-in-law to an earthly king ; but what is such an honour compared with that of being sons of God, and joint heirs through Jesus Christ, nay heirs of God having God in Christ as a sure and satisfying portion, and heaven as an everlasting home ! But finally, upon this part of the subject, we would observe, that the height of the love of Christ will appear in his raising the bodies of his people from the

grave at the last day, in acknowledging them before an assembled world, and in elevating them to inconceivable heights of happiness, by setting them down with himself upon his throne in the celestial world. His love to his people is so strong and ardent, that it will never be at rest till it has raised them to this astonishing elevation. We may, therefore, say of it, as Naomi to Ruth, concerning Boaz, Ruth iii. 18, "The man will not be in rest until he have finished the thing." Of all that the Father hath given him he will lose nothing, but will raise it up at the last day. Having raised the bodies of the saints from the grave, he will fashion them like unto his own glorious body, and fit them for bearing the splendours, and engaging in the exercises, of the heavenly world. Having stationed them on his right hand, he will say to them, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." They shall ascend with him into the heavenly world, where he will raise them to inconceivable heights of glory and happiness. "If I go away, I will come again and take you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also." While Solomon testified his love unto his mother, by causing her to sit upon a throne on his right hand, Jesus manifests the height of his love unto his people by causing them to sit with him upon his throne. Thus, in one view, he will raise them above angels; for, while they are represented as standing around the throne in heaven, his saints are expressly said to sit upon it. But what the height of this dignity and happiness will be we cannot now declare. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; this only we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." What, then, is the height of that

love which raises the redeemed to so high a happiness! What an amazing elevation! What a wonderful height of love! How marvellous! how mysterious! If, when viewed on this footstool in the light of Scripture, it appear so high that the eye of faith trembles while it views it, and the mind is filled with admiration, how shall we be astonished when in heaven we contemplate its stupendous height in a clearer medium, with stronger faculties, and to greater advantage! But even in the highest heaven this love will appear to reach far above it; for its height is infinite, and exceeds the reach of finite minds. But we lose ourselves in this boundless subject,—a subject which eludes the grasp of our finite faculties. Let us learn, then, in humble silence to admire and adore what we shall never be able fully to comprehend—the breadth and the length, the depth and the height, of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.

We shall now conclude by directing your attention to the practical improvement of what has been delivered upon this subject.

1st, In reviewing this subject you may see, in the first place, what is one important and distinguishing feature in the character of all real Christians. All true Christians have distinct scriptural apprehensions of the person and love of Christ in dying for them. They have spiritual views of his person, offices, and grace, for though once they were darkness, they are now light in the Lord. Hereby they perceive the love of God, because he laid down his life for them. Hence, we find the Apostle in this passage praying in behalf of the Ephesians, that they might, with all saints, apprehend the astonishing dimensions of the love of Christ, plainly intimating that they are



not saints who are destitute of this discernment. The person and love of Christ in dying for the sins of his people, are so far from being speculative points that the scriptural knowledge of them is essential to the existence of a Christian. If it is eternal life to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, it must be eternal death to remain ignorant of this knowledge. All true Christians therefore know the grace of God and the love of Jesus. Their minds have been enlightened by the word and Spirit, and led to a clear discernment of the doctrines of the gospel, of the glory of the Redeemer's person, and the wonders of his love. They have an unction of the Holy One, and know all things ; for all Zion's children shall be taught of God, and great shall be the peace of her children.

2d. From what has been said you may see that the Christian's sanctification will bear proportion to his spiritual discernment and experimental knowledge of the love of Christ. The believing contemplation of the love of Christ will always be accompanied with a corresponding impression upon the heart, and influence upon the conduct. This love is not set before us in Scripture, or in the ordinances, to be admired and remembered merely, but also to be felt, and it will be felt by all those who discern its excellence and perceive its amazing dimensions. While the contemplation of Christ, set forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood, leads us to perceive the righteous character of God, and affords hope and confidence in our approaches unto him ; it subdues, at the same time, the love of sin in the heart, and leads to walk in all holy obedience. The law of Christ thus becomes a principle of universal holiness. It deadens and destroys the love of sin in the heart. It shows the evil of sin and the necessity of holiness, and leads to the practice

of every duty. Hence the Apostle, who felt the influence of this love, declares, in the name of all real Christians, "for the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then they all have died, that they who live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again." The true reason, therefore, why sinners still live in sin, is because they have no discernment or experimental knowledge of the love of Christ; and the reason why the holiness of real Christians is so imperfect, is because their discernment and experimental knowledge of the love of Christ are incomplete. If they wish therefore to grow either in holiness or comfort, it should be their daily prayer unto God that he would shed abroad the love of Christ in their hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto them.

3d. From what has been said Christians may be led to examine the nature of their love unto Christ. If your love unto Christ be genuine, it will in some measure correspond with his love unto you—it will be possessed of the same dimensions. Your love unto Christ will have a breadth in it—it will extend to all his offices and relations; to all his laws, and ordinances, and people. You will love him as your prophet, and your king, as well as your great High Priest, and you will have a respect unto all his commandments. Your love unto him will have a length in it—it will not be a temporary feeling excited by some momentary impulse or impression, but it will be a steady, permanent principle, running through the whole of life, and influencing you in every situation in which you may be placed. It will have a depth in it—it will not float upon the surface, but sink to the bottom of your hearts; it will rest upon a deepspiritual knowledge, and be strongly felt in your souls. And it will have a height in it. You

will love Christ with a supreme affection, above father or mother, and every thing in a present world. You will love him now in the highest heaven, and you will never be satisfied until you see him as he is. As many are this day to profess love to Jesus by sitting down at his table, they ought seriously to examine the nature of their love unto Christ before they approach unto him. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. If your love unto Christ be not such as we have described, if it do not correspond in some measure in its dimensions to the love of Christ unto his people, you have reason to fear it is not genuine, and such as distinguishes all real Christians. This love is absolutely necessary to render you acceptable guests at the table of the Lord; for if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha; and while he is thus accursed he cannot come to the table of the Lord and obtain a blessing. Now every person in this assembly is either believing and admiring, or despising and disregarding the love of Christ in dying for sinners. To which of these classes do you belong? If to the first, you are happy, and shall be welcome guests at the table of the Lord; if to the latter, you are miserable, and if you live and die in this situation your misery will be eternal.

In the last place, from what has been said, you may see what ought to be the prayer of every communicant, in the view of going to the table of the Lord. As the preparation of the heart is from the Lord, so it is unto the Lord we must pray for this preparation. Adopting the prayer of the Apostle, therefore, in this passage, let every communicant pray "that he may be strengthened with all might by his Spirit in the inner man," that Christ Jesus



may dwell in his heart by faith, and that, “being rooted and grounded in love, he may be able with all saints to apprehend what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.” And let him pray in the language of the Psalmist, with which we shall conclude, Ps. xliii. 3, 4—“O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me, let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy.” Amen.

## SERMON VIII.

### JOB'S DECLARATION OF TRUST IN CHRIST AS HIS LIVING AND ALMIGHTY REDEEMER.

Job xix. 25, 26.

“ For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth : and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.”

DIVINE revelation is admirably adapted to the state and circumstances of man. Considered as an ignorant and guilty, a miserable and mortal creature, it meets and relieves his various wants. But if there be any situation to which its influence peculiarly extends, it is that of affliction. The doctrines which it promulgates, the promises which it makes, and the prospects which it opens to our view beyond death and the grave, when known and believed, have a powerful effect in supporting the mind under all the calamities of a present life. The truth of this observation is remarkably illustrated in the character and conduct of the patriarch Job. He was a man who lived at an early period of the world, and was possessed of an amiable and excellent character. As no notice is taken of the Mosaic economy, and as there is no allusion in the book that bears his name to the Jewish history, it may be inferred that he lived prior to Moses. The great age to which he arrived, having lived one hundred and forty years, after returning prosperity, is a strong additional proof of this assertion. He was a man distinguished by his piety, integrity, and beneficence, and who uniformly devoted his time and talents to the service of God and the

benefit of mankind. For the trial of his faith and patience, however, he is suddenly deprived of his temporal comforts, and plunged into the deepest affliction and distress. Of this he gives us an affecting representation in the preceding verses of this chapter. Instead of sinking, however, under the weight of his distress, he is supported by faith in the consolatory doctrines of religion, and turning his attention to his great Deliverer, and to the glorious termination of all his trials, he exclaims, in the words of the text, "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." Your attention has been lately directed to the sufferings and death of your Redeemer. You have been contemplating his amazing love in giving his life a ransom for you, and now we would turn your thoughts to him as your living and exalted Lord, who hath entered into his glory with the peace of an endless life. In treating of this subject, we propose, in reliance upon divine aid,

I. To state and illustrate some of the important truths which are evidently contained in the words of the text.

II. To show you that the knowledge and belief of these truths, may support us under all the calamities of life, and even in the immediate prospect of dissolution.

And then we shall conclude with an application of what may be said.

I. We are to state and illustrate some of the important truths which are evidently contained in the words of our text.

1st. And here, in the first place, we observe from



these words, that God has *provided a Redeemer for sinful men, and that every believer may claim interest in him*, under this endearing character. A Redeemer is one who delivers from a state of bondage and of misery. Such was not the condition in which man was originally placed. When he came from the hand of his Maker, he was a holy and a happy creature. He had free access unto God as his father and friend, and in his favour he enjoyed the greatest felicity. But man being in honour did not abide. By abusing the liberty which was essential to his moral nature, and to a state of probation, he sinned against God, and involved himself in guilt and misery. From that moment, instead of being a son of God, and an heir of glory, he became a child of wrath, and an heir of condemnation; a slave of Satan, and his own imperious lusts. He lost his innocence, his liberty and happiness, and involved himself in guilt, in slavery, and in wretchedness. Having become by transgression an associate with fallen angels, he might have been permitted to perish with them in their rebellion, and God might have glorified his holiness, his justice, and his faithfulness in his destruction. But behold with adoring wonder the operation of saving, sovereign grace! While God is pleased to permit sinning angels to perish without remedy or hope, he sends redemption to the fallen sons of men. Their guilt and bondage gave occasion for the discovery of redeeming love, which prompted infinite wisdom to devise a plan of mercy for their recovery and redemption. To the proposals of infinite wisdom in the salvation of sinners, our glorious Redeemer readily agreed, saying, "Lo, I come: to do thy will, O my God, I take delight: yea, thy law is within my heart. If they have wronged thee, or owe thee anything,

put that to mine account, I will repay it." What he thus freely undertook in the counsels of peace, he has fully accomplished. When the time fixed by God arrived, he assumed our nature, that he might have a right to the redemption, and a ransom to pay; and being made under the law, that he might redeem us who were under the law, he not only obeyed its precepts, but suffered its penalty, and never stopped in his course of obedience and sufferings, until in triumph he could exclaim, "It is finished;" for he "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Thus, by shedding his own most precious blood, he paid the price of our redemption, or made a complete and accepted atonement for our sins, and now he is possessed of power to deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, that we may serve God in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives. In the gospel, this Redeemer is exhibited, and his redemption offered freely to all men. God hath set forth Christ as a propitiation through faith in his blood, and every sinner, whether sensible of his situation or not, is invited to believe on him, that he may be saved. The gospel is preached to all nations for the obedience of faith; and it is by believing in this Redeemer that we have personal interest in him, and may without presumption call him ours. The gospel brings near unto us as sinners the righteousness and redemption of Christ, to be received and enjoyed by faith; and therefore, to "as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." But although every one who believes in Christ, has personal interest in him as his Redeemer, yet all who enjoy this privilege, are not sensible of it, nor can they at all times adopt the

assured language of the text, and call him theirs : on the contrary, their faith may be so weak, and the power of sin so strong, that they may sometimes suspect they are still in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. The knowledge of a personal interest in Christ as our Redeemer, in general arises from the application of his redemption, or from experiencing its saving and salutary effects upon our hearts and lives. As Peter, from his chains falling off and by finding himself at liberty, knew that the Lord had sent his angel and delivered him, so real Christians, by being delivered from the bondage of iniquity, and enjoying the liberty of the sons of God, know that they are interested in Christ as their Redeemer. If the Redeemer be ours indeed, we must be united to him by the Spirit, who is a spirit of holiness, and be walking in newness and holiness of life ; and hence it is, by our moral purity, that we are to ascertain our interest in him. The Apostle evidently proceeds upon this principle when he says, 1 Pet. i. 18, 19, " Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, but with the precious blood of Christ." Every believer, therefore, who has been renewed by the Spirit, has interest in Christ as his Redeemer, and may say of him, " My beloved is mine, and I am his." Happy will it be for us if we can assert our connection with this Redeemer upon the same solid grounds that Job did in the words before us, or if we can say of him with Paul, Gal. ii. 20, " I am crucified with Christ : nevertheless I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me : and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

2d. Another important truth contained in these



words is, that this Redeemer who existed as the Son of God from eternity, and who in the fulness of time hath saved his people by his blood, *now lives for evermore*. From what has already been stated it appears, that in the person of this Redeemer the divine and human natures are united in a mysterious and incomprehensible manner. Hence he is styled Immanuel, God with us, and God manifest in the flesh. In the Old Testament, the same person is spoken of as Lord, as an angel, and as the Son of man. These various appellations can be applied only to our Redeemer, who by nature is God, by office an angel or messenger, and who appeared to some of the patriarchs in the likeness of a man, as a prelude to his future incarnation. Hence Jacob calls him, Gen. xlviii. 15, 16, the angel before whom his father walked, and who redeemed him from all evil. Of this same glorious being Job declares, in the words of our text, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," or, as the words might be translated, "is the living one." If this Redeemer be God, or the Son of God, as Scripture declares, then he must have life in himself. He must be the independent Jehovah, deriving existence from no external source. As the highest creature in the scale of being receives its life from God, so it holds that life in continual dependence upon him, for to be a creature, and to be dependent, are synonymous terms. Life in the creature is like water in the stream, but life in the Redeemer is like water in the fountain. Hence it is said of him, John i. 4, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." He is emphatically called the Prince of life, for, John v. 26, "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." But although the Redeemer, as God, hath life in

himself, yet, in order that he might save his people by his blood, it was necessary that he should die for them. As the divine nature was impassable, or incapable of suffering, that he might be qualified for this work he took our nature into union with his divine person, and gave himself a ransom for many. He substituted himself in the room of his people, and in their nature paid the debt which they had contracted: for he suffered the just for them the unjust that he might bring them unto God. Having died for his people as their surety, he also rose again for their justification. He had power to lay down his life, and power to take it again. Having fulfilled all righteousness, it was not possible that he should be held of death. Having paid the uttermost farthing, it was proper that he should be discharged, and raised to the honour which the Father promised to confer upon him; and accordingly, on the third day, he rose from the dead, and was thus declared to be the Son of God with power. Now he is exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high, and, as the Redeemer of his people, lives for evermore, his life and office being both eternal. He lives in heaven as the head of his people, having right and power to communicate life to them, to preserve this life, and to carry it forward to full perfection. Hence his people are said to be risen with him, to sit with him in heavenly places, his life and theirs being inseparably connected; for, because he lives they shall live also. All these important truths are evidently included in that illustrious description which the Redeemer gives of himself, Rev. i. 18, “ ‘ I am he that liveth,’ or the living one; this is spoken of him as God having life in himself; ‘ and was dead,’ or I died in human nature to redeem my people, for the Prince of life was slain, the Lord

of glory was crucified, and 'I am alive for evermore, amen.' As the Redeemer, I live for ever; death hath no more dominion over me; nay, I have dominion over death, for I have not only power to save from destruction, but to give eternal life to all my people." How consolatory in this dying world to know that this Redeemer liveth!

3d. Another truth contained in these words is, that this living Redeemer shall *stand at the latter day upon the earth*, for accomplishing some great and important purposes. As the word *day* is not in the original, the Hebrew word may either be translated the last, or, at the last. If we adopt the first of these translations, it will apply to the person of Christ, and characterize him by one of the titles which he sometimes assumes in Sacred Scripture; for the last is a name given unto Christ, both in the Old and New Testament. Isaiah xlv. 6—"Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his Redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and besides me there is no God." In the book of the Revelations, i. 11, we find Christ claiming this character to himself, "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last"—the first cause and the last end of all things; for all things were not only created by him, but for him. According to the second translation, which we are more disposed to adopt, the expression will not apply to the person of the Redeemer, but to the period when the event here mentioned shall take place. He shall stand at the last upon the earth. In order to understand this expression, it will be necessary to observe, that the whole of time in Sacred Scripture is divided into three grand periods. The first extends from the creation to the giving of the law; the second reaches from the promulgation of the law to



the appearance of the Son of God in our nature ; and the third includes the whole of time from the appearance of Christ in the flesh to the consummation of all things. Now, it is to be noticed that this period is frequently called in Scripture the last time, or the last days. Many passages might be quoted in proof of this, but the following may suffice :—Is. ii. 2—“ It shall come to pass in the last days.” Heb. i. 2—“ God hath spoken unto us in these last days by his Son.” From this view, it is evident that the expression “ shall stand upon the earth at the latter day,” as used by Job, must signify that he knew by divine revelation that his Redeemer would appear at the last to accomplish the work of redemption, and that he would come at the last day to judge the world in righteousness. The Old Testament saints knew more of Christ, and of his appearance in this world, than we are apt to imagine. Abraham, we are assured, John viii. 56, rejoiced, or rather longed to see the day of Christ; “ he saw it, and was glad.” Nay, we are told, Jude 14, 15, that even Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of Christ’s coming to judgment, saying, “ Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment.” Job knew that his Redeemer would appear upon the earth at the latter days to give his life a ransom for many, and that, at the consummation of all things, he would come again to raise the dead, to judge an assembled world, and to render to every man according to his works. At that great day, we are assured in Scripture, he shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God. The dead shall hear his voice, and shall come forth ; they who have done good to the resurrection of life, and they who have done evil, to the resurrec-

tion of condemnation. The dead in Christ shall rise in glory, in consequence of their union with their blessed Redeemer; while the wicked shall be raised by divine power and justice, and dragged from their graves as from a prison to judgment. The whole human race shall stand before the Judge, for we must all appear. The righteous, placed upon the right hand of the Judge, shall be acknowledged and acquitted from every charge, and hear with humility and transport the Judge addressing them, saying, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;" while upon the wicked stationed on his left he will pronounce that dreadful sentence, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Such are some of the important purposes for which the Redeemer is to stand upon the earth at the last day. The doctrine of a resurrection, a general judgment, and a future state, seems never to have been entirely concealed from the church of God. It was obscurely revealed under the ancient dispensation, and formed part of the faith of true believers. The heresy of the Sadducees, who denied this doctrine, shows that it was the general belief of the people of God. Life and immortality are indeed brought to light, or illustrated by the gospel. Our faith in these doctrines is strengthened and confirmed, and now every believer may say with confidence, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand upon the earth at the latter day, for he will come the second time without sin unto salvation, and then every eye shall see him." Which leads us to observe—

4th and lastly, that although death may occasion the destruction of the body, yet *believers in their flesh shall see the Redeemer in glori-*

*fied humanity* in the heavenly world. Though God is a spirit, and, consequently, invisible; yet when Christ assumed our nature, he became God manifest in the flesh. Believers in this world then saw his glory, "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and of truth." This was a privilege, however, vouchsafed only to a few; but all who believe shall in their glorified bodies see the Redeemer as he is. It is true, flesh and blood, or human nature in its present state, cannot inherit the kingdom of God. The bodies of believers, therefore, when raised from the grave shall be spiritual bodies; yet they shall be material bodies, the same in substance as they are at present, though possessed of much higher qualities. The soul shall, after the resurrection, gather information by means of the wondrous organization of the body, which will be then strengthened and fitted for the light of heaven. Various objects shall then be presented to the view of the redeemed, and the glorified body of the Redeemer shall become an object of wonder and admiration. As he was seen upon the mount of transfiguration by those who were honoured to attend him upon this occasion, so he shall be seen upon Mount Zion by all his ransomed people, in accordance with his prayer when he said, "Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." When he ascended into heaven in our nature, the eyes of Enoch and Elias would be attracted by his glorious appearance, and fixed upon him; and as Moses appeared upon the mount in his glorified body which had been taken into heaven, so his eyes, too, would be fixed upon the glorified humanity of the ascended Redeemer. With what admiration would they see him enter into heaven



in our nature, and with what growing astonishment have they ever since beheld him! But although this was an honour in some measure peculiar unto them, yet this honour have all the saints—that in their flesh too, in their glorified bodies, they shall see God their Redeemer in our nature. What an astonishing, transporting sight! The glory of his divinity in this world was veiled by his manhood, and mortal sight could not bear its full splendour; but then his glory shall shine forth unveiled, without obstruction or obscuration, and the eyes of the glorified bodies of the saints shall be strengthened to behold it. The glory of all the divine perfections shall be collected and concentrated in the person of the Redeemer. He shall be placed in wonderful nearness unto the redeemed, and the eyes of their glorified bodies shall be continually directed to him, and view him with wonder, and love, and transport. Many astonishing objects will be seen in heaven; but the most wonderful object in heaven, and that which shall fix universal attention, will be the glorified body of Jesus Christ. O! how transporting will it be to behold this Redeemer, who loved us with an everlasting love—who bought us with his blood—who fed us with the bread of life—who led and comforted us in this world, and conducted us in safety to his Father's house. Him having not seen, we now love, but when we shall see him as he is, this love will rise to extasy and transport, and we shall exclaim, how great his goodness, how great his beauty! With what pleasure would a person who had been pining under slavery and disease in some foreign land behold, for the first time, the man who sent a large sum for his ransom, and proper medicine for the restoration of his health! but with what higher delight will the redeemed in heaven behold him

who bought them with his blood, and raised them from hell to heaven! Though their admiration for a moment may prevent their praise, by preventing utterance, yet, seeing him as he is, they shall begin to sing a new song, saying, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever."

II. We now proceed to the second thing proposed in the method; namely, to show that the knowledge and belief of these truths may support us under the evils and calamities of life.

1st. We observe that the knowledge and belief of these truths may support our minds under the distress arising from the *dark and perplexing dispensations of divine providence*. As rational creatures it is evident we are at present living under the moral government of God, and have reason to believe that his providence extends to every event. The present, however, is by no means a state of exact retribution. Such traces of divine justice may be observed as are sufficient to convince us that God governs the world; and yet so much injustice and oppression are to be seen, as to show us the necessity, and, consequently, the certainty of a future state. All things come alike to all,—nay sometimes the wicked prosper and rise to power, while the good and virtuous are borne down and oppressed. "So I returned," says Solomon, "and considered all the oppressions that are

done under the sun: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter." The deceitful impose upon the honest—the mighty oppress the mean—the wicked persecute the just—and the violent deprive the sober and industrious of their property or lives. Thus, the Sabeans and Chaldeans took away the cattle of Job, and slew his servants with the edge of the sword. The prophets, too, were slain by those to whom they were sent. The honest Baptist is beheaded by the cruelty of a prince whose vices he had reproved. The apostles and primitive Christians were persecuted, afflicted, and tormented; and all who will live godly in the world must suffer persecution. The serious contemplation of these things has often occasioned much distress to reflecting minds, and has sometimes led them to call in question the wisdom and equity of the divine administration. Thus, Asaph declares that he was envious of the foolish when he saw the prosperity of the wicked, and that he thought he had cleansed his heart in vain, and washed his hands in innocency. Were the present the only condition of man—were there no righteous judgment, or future state of rewards and punishments, it would be difficult, perhaps impossible, for us to give any satisfactory account of the dispensations of providence, or to justify the ways of heaven to man. But when this doctrine is admitted—when the truths in our text are known and believed, the difficulty immediately vanishes, and we see the wisdom and propriety of such a mixed administration. The unequal distributions of providence are necessary to a state of discipline: they are requisite for the trial of the faith and patience of the saints,



and for training them up for a state of happiness in a future world. For wise ends, therefore, the great Ruler of the universe does not immediately interpose, but allows men to gratify their passions, to follow their own inclinations, and thus to discover their genuine character. He permits the wicked to persecute the just, while the righteous, for the trial and improvement of their virtues, suffer in secrecy or in silence. But matters, we are assured, shall not always proceed in this manner. The triumphing of the wicked is short—the joy of the hypocrite for a moment. The Redeemer shall stand upon the earth as the great Judge of all, at the latter day, and then judgment shall return unto righteousness. Then a final distinction shall be made between the righteous and the wicked; the one shall be rewarded, and the other shall be punished. To them who, by a patient continuance in well-doing, have sought for glory, honour, and immortality, he will render eternal life; but to the contentious and disobedient—to those who do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish. It is the belief of this important truth which supports the minds of Christians under all their sufferings from the hands of ungodly men; and it is often brought forward in Scripture with this view. James v. 6, 7, 8—“Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you. Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.” Rom. viii. 18—“For the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed

in us." 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18—"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen."

2d. The knowledge and belief of the important truths we have been considering may support the minds of believers under the *languor and deadness which they sometimes experience*. Though all real Christians are quickened with Christ Jesus, and endowed with a principle of spiritual life which shall never be entirely extinguished, yet this principle may at times be feeble, and the exercise of grace may be languid in their hearts. From the power of corruption, the force of temptation, or the temporary suspension of divine influence, they may experience little liveliness in the performance of duty. The things which remain with them may languish, and be apparently ready to die. This seems to have been the case with Job when he said, "Oh that it were with me as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shone upon me: Oh that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat." This spiritual deadness, however, which even true believers may sometimes experience, is totally different from that spiritual death which characterizes the ungodly, who are dead in trespasses and in sins. The languor of the real Christian is partial and temporary—is felt, lamented, and resisted; whereas, the deadness of the unholy and impenitent is total and constant, and is neither felt nor opposed by them. They are quite insensible to their situation—they are neither sorry for it nor desire deliverance from it, being willing to remain under the power of spiritual death. The Christian, on the other hand, feels and laments his spiritual languor, and earnestly

wishes to be renewed. How consolatory, in this situation, are the truths of the text, and what relief do they afford to his mourning mind! Though his heart and affections are dead and languid, yet his Redeemer lives; and because he lives, he shall live also. As his spiritual life is derived from Jesus Christ, so it shall be preserved, increased, and perfected by him. By his providence he preserves his soul in life, and by his power he shall preserve the principle of spiritual life he has graciously imparted. "I, the Lord, do keep it, lest any hurt it; I will keep it night and day." Through the gracious influences of his Spirit he will revive and comfort his people, and raise them to higher degrees of vigour and animation. Though the branch, indeed, connected with the stem may be stript of its leaves, and seem to wither in winter; yet, in consequence of this connection, it shall revive in spring—it shall bud and flourish, and may acquire greater strength and fruitfulness than before. In like manner, though the Christian may experience a spiritual winter, when all is cold and dead, he shall also enjoy a spring. Ps. xcii. 13—"Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God." Hos. xiv. 5, 6—"I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon: his branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon." Hos. vi. 2—"After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight." While the Redeemer lives, his people shall enjoy spiritual life and seasonable reviving. Well, therefore, may the believers pray, Ps. lxxxv. 6, "Revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee,"—"quicken us, that we may call upon thy name." Nay, having thus



prayed unto the God of their life, they may say with the Psalmist, Ps. cxxxviii. 7, "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me."

3d. The knowledge and belief of the truths contained in this passage may support our minds under the *loss of near relations, or dear christian friends*. The connections of this world are, like the world itself, of a transitory nature. Everything here is in perpetual fluctuation; and nothing is certain but change. Our dearest joys are but dying joys; and the tenderest connections of life are often broken by the rude hand of death. Parents who were happy in their children may like Job be deprived of them suddenly and unexpectedly. Friends like David and Jonathan may be divided by death. Aged widows, like her of Nain, may have only sons—the staff of their age, and the hope of their families—torn from their embrace. Those who have long been happy under the care of a faithful pastor, may be deprived of his instructions, and left to lament his loss: for our fathers, where are they? and the prophets do not live for ever. These are some of the severest trials of life, and, as some of you may have lately felt them in your own experience, we do not wish to open the wounds which may be hardly closed. When Christians meet with these bereavements, they ought to be sensible of them, for they are not to despise the chastening of the Lord. It is therefore noticed as an evidence of the great degeneracy of Israel in the days of Isaiah, that when the righteous perished, no man laid it to heart. But although Christians are allowed to mourn upon these occasions, they are not to discover excessive sorrow, or to mourn as others who have no hope. They are to call to mind the reviving truths of the text, and to be comforted. If parents are deprived of children,

the Lord in the course of his providence can give them others in their stead, as he did unto Job; or he can give them—in his house, and within his walls—a name and a place, better than that of sons or of daughters—even an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. If an earthly friend or brother is removed by death, there is one who sticketh closer than a brother. He is a father to the fatherless, and a husband to the widow, in his holy habitation. Though faithful servants who have finished their work are taken away, the Lord lives, and he can send forth other labourers into his vineyard. Thus, when an Elijah was removed, a double portion of his spirit rested upon Elisha. When Moses died Joshua succeeded him, and led the people into the promised land; and when Stephen expired under the hands of his persecutors, Saul is called from among them, and becomes a successful preacher of the gospel he once laboured to destroy. As this Redeemer purchased his people with his blood, so he will give them faithful pastors, who shall feed them with knowledge and understanding. It is sufficient, therefore, to comfort Christians under all their bereavements, to know that their Redeemer liveth. Whoever dies, he liveth; and, therefore, in every situation they may say, “The Lord liveth; and blessed be our Rock; and let the God of our salvation be exalted.” Though the stream may be dried up, the fountain is still full, for Jesus is the same to-day, yesterday, and for ever. If we are real Christians, and our connexions have died in the Lord, we may indulge the pleasing hope of soon being with them, and enjoying in their society consummate happiness.

4th and lastly. The knowledge and belief of the truths we have been considering may support our

minds in the *immediate prospect of our own dissolution*. It is appointed for all men once to die, and after death the judgment. Death to all men is a solemn and interesting season; it is the close of time and the commencement of eternity. It is awful to human nature even in prospect, and when it arrives is apt to fill us with terror and dismay. Although we cannot distinctly apprehend its nature, yet this very circumstance clothes it with additional terror. We are certain, however, that death will strip us of our earthly all—of our wealth, our honour, or temporal delights; that it will produce a separation between soul and body, sending our spirits into the invisible world, and consigning our bodies to the silent grave. It is no wonder, therefore, that death should be an object of terror to men, and that a consciousness of guilt, and a sense of responsibility, should increase this fear, and that some timid Christians, through fear of death, should all their life-time be subject to bondage. But however awful the prospect of dissolution may be, the consolatory truths we have been reviewing are fitted to remove our fears, and even to inspire us with hope and joy. Death to the redeemed is a vanquished foe; he is not the king of terror, but the messenger of peace, sent to set the prisoner free. Christ by dying has disarmed him of his sting, perfumed the grave, and made it a bed of rest unto his followers; he has gone before them into the invisible world to prepare mansions unto all his people; and he assures them that he has the keys of hell and of death. He is the Lord of the invisible world; he will receive the departing spirits of his people at death, and render them happy in a separate state: and, although their bodies shall rest for a season in the grave, yet as they sleep in Jesus, when the morning of the



resurrection shall dawn he will raise them up in glory. He will ransom them from the power of the grave. O death! he will be thy plague: O grave! he will be thy destruction. Of all that the Father hath given him he will lose nothing, but will raise it up at the last day. The souls and bodies of the redeemed shall be re-united; and their bodies being fashioned after the glorious body of Christ shall be possessed of senses qualifying them for looking upon him, and bearing the splendour of his immediate glorious presence. Then in their flesh they shall see God, or their Redeemer, who is God and man in one glorious person. This vision shall be immediate, transforming, and satisfying. They shall see him for themselves, and not for another; they shall be formed into a perfect resemblance unto his image, and they shall be satisfied when they awake with his likeness. This vision, therefore, shall complete their felicity. Though the glory of the invisible world were conferred on the redeemed, yet we have reason to believe, that without the vision of the Redeemer their felicity would be incomplete. The Redeemer is the sun of the celestial world, and according to his own declaration, the beholding of his glory is the sum and substance of the heavenly happiness. "Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me may be where I am, that they may behold my glory." The belief of these consolatory truths deprives death of its terror, and removes the gloom of the grave; nay, it makes it the gate of glory. A ray of light darts into the valley and shadow of death, and makes this valley of Achor a door of hope. With what confidence may real Christians commit their departing spirits into the hands of this living Redeemer, and how cheerfully may they resign their bodies to the grave, as

to a bed of undisturbed repose! If at night we lie down with composure upon our beds, in hopes of arising with bodies refreshed in the morning, and fitted for the labours of the succeeding day, with how much greater serenity may we lay down our bodies in the grave, in the assured hope that sleeping in Jesus they shall be raised in the morning of the resurrection, refined, purified, and strengthened, and fitted for sharing in the service and enjoyments of the heavenly world! Hence we find the knowledge and belief of these truths enabling believers to meet death not merely with dignity and composure, but with holy triumph; saying, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ. I know in whom I have believed; and I am persuaded that he is able to keep what I have committed to him against that day. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course, and kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give unto me in that day; and not only unto me, but unto all them who love his appearing. I have therefore a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better."

Having thus finished what we proposed, it only remains that we conclude with some application of what hath been said.

1st. From what has been said you may be led to admire the grace of God in providing a Redeemer for sinful men. This provision springs entirely from divine philanthropy, from pure benevolence, and is the fruit and evidence of sovereign love. God so loved the world as to give his only begotten and well-beloved Son, that whosoever

believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life. By grace we are saved through faith; and that not of ourselves: it is the gift of God. That God should have so loved us, sinful beings of an inferior order, as to send redemption unto us, while it was withheld from creatures of an higher rank, is astonishing, and must fill the pious mind with wonder and admiration. Behold what manner of love is this the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! Blessed be the Lord God, who hath visited and redeemed his people, and raised up for them an horn of salvation in the house of his servant David. Blessed also be he who came in the name of the Lord to save us. Hosannah in the highest.

2d. From what hath been said you may see the incomparable excellence of this Redeemer. Every perfection adorns his person, every grace dignifies his character, and every virtue shines in his conduct. How great and yet how good! how high and yet how humble! He is just such a Redeemer as we wish and want, and is able to save unto the uttermost. He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person; fairer than the sons of men, than the sons of God. He surpasses in personal excellence every created being as far as the brightness of the sun excels the twinkling of the midnight star. He is the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. How glorious is he in his person; how suitable in his offices; how condescending in his grace! Did he not appear amiable in your view while you contemplated his glory, and remembered his love, at his table? Did not his glory eclipse all created excellence, and lead you to exclaim, "How great his goodness! how great his beauty!" He is worthy of your highest love, your firmest trust, your most



exalted praise. You can never esteem him as you ought, and as he deserves. He is an ever-living and ever-loving Redeemer. He will carry on and perfect your redemption, for he ever lives to make intercession for you. O love the Lord, then, all ye his saints; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy.

3d. From what hath been said you may be led to inquire if you are interested in this Redeemer, and can call him your own. Many who hear the gospel have no interest in him. They have been invited, indeed, to come to him, but they have not complied with the invitation. Having no sense of their spiritual maladies, they have not come to the great Physician. Have you, then, been aroused from a state of spiritual security, felt your misery as sinners, and your inability to deliver yourselves? Have you obtained any satisfying discoveries of the person, and power, and official character of this Redeemer? Have you received him in the whole extent of his mediatorial character, as exhibited to you in the gospel; and do you rest upon him with undivided confidence for life and salvation? Do you love him with a supreme affection, and hate sin with a perfect hatred? Have you been delivered from a vain conversation, and are you keeping yourselves from your iniquity? Do you enjoy the liberty of the sons of God, and are you serving God in holiness and righteousness all the days of your life? Do you wish to know the will of God that you may obey it, and are you more concerned to be holy than to be rich, and great, and honourable, in the world? Finally, are you daily looking to this Redeemer to subdue

your iniquities, to carry on the good work in your souls, and finally to perfect what concerns you? If this be your character, you have reason to conclude that you have an interest in this Redeemer, and that with Job in this passage you may call him yours—saying, “ My Lord and my God, my Redeemer ; yea, my all and in all.”

4th. From what has been said you may see the misery of those who have no connection with this Redeemer, and the happiness of the redeemed. All those who have no interest in this Redeemer are miserable, in whatever station they may be placed. They are the servants of sin, and the slaves of Satan, and strangers to genuine liberty and real happiness. The Redeemer lives ; but, having no connection with him, they are dead while they live. He shall stand upon this earth at the last day, not to perfect their redemption, but to pronounce upon them a sentence of condemnation, and to execute upon them merited punishment. In their flesh, indeed, they shall see him ; for every eye shall see him ; but they shall see him not as their Redeemer, but coming in flaming fire to take vengeance upon them who know not God, and who have not obeyed the gospel of his Son. Their situation is at present deplorable, but it is not yet desperate ; for there is hope in Israel concerning them. This Redeemer is still waiting to be gracious ; he is exalted that he may have mercy upon you. Be persuaded, then, to come to him, and to accept of his finished redemption. Then you shall experience a present deliverance in this world, and rejoice in the prospect of eternal redemption in the world to come ; for consider how happy the redeemed of the Lord are in every situation ; they are happy in time, and they shall be blessed through eternity. When Job was deprived of his worldly

comforts, and suffered the loss of his earthly all, he knew that his Redeemer lived, and he rejoiced in him in the absence of every created comfort. Believers are happier in their worst estate than wicked men are in their best. Their hearts, indeed, know their own sadness, but a stranger intermeddleth not with their joy. The great truths of the gospel being known and believed, support their souls under the pressure of affliction, and in the prospect of dissolution. They are in a dying world, and they know that in a little they must die; but they know that their Redeemer liveth, that he shall stand upon the earth at the latter day, and that in their flesh they shall see God. Then they shall lift up their heads with joy, for the day of their complete redemption shall come. Then they shall see their redeeming Lord, whom they loved unseen in this world: and then, in the beautiful language of the prophet, with which we shall conclude, Is. xxxv. 10—"The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Amen.



## SERMON IX.

### THE HAPPINESS OF THOSE WHOSE GOD IS THE LORD.

PSALM cxliv. 15.

“ Yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord.”

THE desire of happiness is natural to the mind of man, and discovered by rational creatures in every period of their existence. As all men are in quest of happiness, and the way which leads to it is so plainly pointed out in Sacred Scripture, it may at first sight seem to be astonishing that so few who enjoy divine revelation should obtain it. The reason, however, is abundantly evident. Instead of seeking happiness in the only path in which it can be enjoyed, they pursue after it in an opposite direction; and, therefore, they are not only disappointed in their pursuit, but the farther they advance, the farther they go astray, and must finally, if they persevere, involve themselves in everlasting misery. It is the distinguishing glory of the gospel, that it gives a plain and satisfactory answer to the question which perplexed the ancient philosophers—“ Wherein consists the true happiness of man?” This inquiry is answered by the Psalmist in the plain and decided language of the text—“ Yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord.” In the preceding context he enumerates the temporal blessings which Israel as a nation enjoyed, while they adhered to the service of God; and he admits, that in this respect they might be said to be happy. Happy is that people that is in such a case—that is, as far as happiness can be de-

rived from the things of this present world. But as these temporal comforts were only typical of the better blessings of the gospel, he subjoins, in the emphatical language of the text, “Yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord.” As many of you this day, by sitting down at the table of the Lord, have avouched the Lord to be your God, I hope this subject will be found suitable to your situation; and in further discoursing from it I propose,

I. To consider and illustrate the character of those whose God is the Lord.

II. To show you the happiness possessed by persons of this description.

Then to conclude with some application of the subject.

I. I am to consider and illustrate the character of those whose God is the Lord.

1st. I observe that they are possessed of *a true and saving knowledge of God in Christ*. That mankind are naturally destitute of this knowledge must be admitted by all who believe divine revelation. This is their character as described in Scripture, and it is drawn there in the strongest colours. “The Lord looked down from heaven, to see if there were any that did understand. They are all gone aside.” “Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.” Some knowledge of God, indeed, may be derived from the light of nature, and the contemplation of the visible creation; “for the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his

eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." But although men may obtain some knowledge of God from viewing the works of surrounding nature—though they may be convinced that he exists, and ought to be worshipped, yet they cannot acquire that knowledge of him which is necessary in order to obtain the pardon of sin, and to enjoy a well-founded hope of future felicity. The true and saving knowledge of God is only to be derived from divine revelation, accompanied with the teaching of the Holy Spirit. It is from divine revelation alone we learn that God exists in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; that he is gracious and merciful; that in Christ Jesus he is reconciling the world unto himself; that there is redemption through the blood of Christ, the forgiveness of all our sins according to the riches of his grace; and that the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. What an expression of the divine goodness unto the sons of men is this revelation! It is like the sun to the moral world, dispelling spiritual darkness, and is able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith in Jesus Christ. But although the possession of the external revelation of the will of God is an unspeakable blessing, something more is necessary to impart unto us the saving knowledge of his people. All who are favoured with this external revelation do not know God. Many of them are still in darkness, and love darkness rather than light, their deeds being evil. Many of the Jews who enjoyed this revelation in part were ignorant of God; and many who enjoy it now, when the canon of Scripture is complete, are in the same situation. The truth is, that, in order to obtain the saving knowledge of God in Christ, we must not only enjoy the external light of divine



revelation, but the eyes of our understandings must be opened to understand it aright. God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, must shine into our minds, to give us to see the light of the knowledge of his glory, as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ. The true and saving knowledge of God, which all his people enjoy, proceeds from himself, and is imparted to them in the use of means, by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Yes; the Father of glory must give unto us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, the eyes of our understandings being enlightened. As this knowledge is promised unto the people of God in Sacred Scripture, so the possession of it shows them to be his peculiar people. Jer. xxiv. 7—"And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God." Heb. viii. 10, 11—"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest." Our Saviour proceeds upon the same principle when he says, John vi. 45, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." From these, and many other passages which might be mentioned, it is evident, that all those who have the Lord for their God, must be taught of him, must have an heart given them to know the truth as it is in Jesus—the doctrines of the gospel, the mysteries of the kingdom, and the glorious method of salvation through the sufferings and sacrifice of the Son of God. Those who are totally

ignorant of these things, can have no interest in Jehovah as their God. But although all the people of God are possessed of a true knowledge of him, you are not to imagine that this knowledge is in the same degree of perfection in them all. As they are possessed of different powers and faculties, and have enjoyed various opportunities of religious instruction, so spiritual knowledge is in different states of improvement in different Christians. Some of them know more, and others less; but all of them are taught of God, and made wise unto salvation. This knowledge is not of a speculative, but practical nature; it does not remain in the head, but descends unto and sanctifies the heart. It is a knowledge which humbles them before God, which is accompanied with diligence in the use of means to grow in knowledge, and which leads them to ascribe all the glory of their illumination to the saving and sovereign grace of God in Christ, saying, "by the grace of God we are what we are!" It is a knowledge which enlightens, comforts, and quickens them, which gives them just views of truth and duty, and which therefore influences the will and affections.

2d. This leads me to observe, that those who have the Lord for their God, *have turned to him with their heart, chosen him as their portion, and give him the decided preference to every created object and worldly enjoyment.* As the understanding is the leading faculty in the human soul, so the will follows its representation. Every thing is chosen or refused by rational creatures, as the mind represents it to be good or evil. The state of the understanding, therefore, forms the character of the man, and gives a decisive direction to his conduct in life. From this statement, it is evident, that the corruption of

our nature may be traced to the blindness of our minds. This is the grand and primary source of our depravity; for a darkened understanding perverts the will and misleads the affections. But if our depravity and misery originate in a blinded mind, our renovation and happiness must arise from an enlightened understanding. The clouds of error and of ignorance which envelop the understanding must be dispelled, and we must become light in the Lord. As in the first creation, God said, "Let there be light, and there was light;" so, in the new creation, his first work is the illumination of the understanding. And accordingly when the believer is regenerated, he "is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him"—Col. iii. 10. But when the understanding is enlightened in the saving knowledge of God, and the mind discerns him to be the most excellent of all beings—the fountain of happiness, the standard of perfection, and the only suitable portion unto the soul of man—the will chooses him as its portion, and gives him the preference to every other object. When the Lord says to his enlightened people, "choose ye this day whom ye will serve," with ancient Israel they say, but with more humility, "the Lord is our God, we will serve the Lord." Hence, we find this choice which the people of God make of him as their portion, expressed in a beautiful variety of language in Sacred Scripture. "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord he is thy God. 'This God is our God for ever and ever, he will be our guide even unto death. Thou art my sure portion whom I did choose, O Lord, I have resolved and said, I will keep thy statutes. The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him.'" This choice is not the blind and hasty election of a moment, but the deliberate



choice of the heart, guided and directed by the light of the mind. Being made in this manner, it is a choice to which the mind adheres in every situation, of which the person never repents, and which reflection and experience tend to strengthen and confirm. The believer, so far from regretting or being ashamed of his choice, glories in it, renews it upon every proper occasion, and is ready to avow it in the most public manner. "One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." Experience in the christian life confirms this choice, and leads him to cleave unto the Lord with increasing ardour. This choice, too, gives a happy direction to the Christian's choice in other matters, and influences the whole of his conduct. Every thing now is chosen or rejected in connection with God, or as it may be agreeable or displeasing unto him. He chooses the way of truth and holiness, because it is agreeable to God; he chooses the word of God as his companion and guide, saying, "Let thy hand be upon me, for I have chosen thy precepts." He chooses the people of God as his friends and associates, as the excellent of the earth, in whom, next to God, is all his delight. He chooses the house of God for his habitation, where he may see the divine glory and feel the divine power. Ps. xxvii. 4—"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple." Upon every occasion he chooses rather to suffer than to sin, and therefore he prefers affliction with the people of God, to the enjoyment of the pleasures of sin for a season. This choice which all the people of God make of him as their portion, does not arise from any supe-

rior wisdom in them ; but is the effect of divine counsel and instruction, which they are ready at all times to acknowledge to the praise of sovereign grace. They love him because he first loved them, and they take him as their God, because they were first chosen of him. He chose them perhaps in the furnace of affliction, into which his love had thrown them ; and then, enlightened by his grace, they chose him as their portion and their all. What Christ therefore said unto his immediate disciples, may be said of all his genuine followers, John xv. 16, “ Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.”

3d. This leads us to observe, that those who have the Lord for their God, *love him with a supreme affection*. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and strength, and mind ; this is the first and great commandment.” Love unto God is founded upon his infinite excellence and amiableness, and the relation in which we stand to him as his rational and intelligent creatures. While God continues infinitely amiable, and we are possessed of the powers and capacities of moral agents, we are bound to love him with all our hearts ; nor can any situation in which we may be placed, free us from this obligation. But although all men are indispensably bound to love God, yet few, it is to be feared, pay much attention to this duty. Of how many professing Christians might the great Searcher of hearts say, as he did of the Jews, “ I know you, that the love of God is not in you.” Nay, although love to God is declared by our Saviour himself to be the first and great commandment, many seem to suppose there is little criminality in disobeying this precept. They readily

admit, that to withhold from a fellow-creature what is right, is unjust; but they never reflect, even while they claim the character of the righteous, that it is the height of injustice in a moral agent to withhold that love from God which is his due, and to set the heart upon the creature more than the Creator, who is God over all, and blessed for ever. The people of God, as well as others, were once entirely destitute of his love; nay, they were enemies unto him in their minds, and by wicked works. Being renewed, however, in the spirit of their minds, they are made partakers of a divine nature, and this holy and heavenly affection is implanted in their hearts. Deut. xxx. 6—“ And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.” The understanding being enlightened to discover the infinite excellence of God, to see him as the perfection of beauty, and the fountain of happiness, love unto him immediately springs up in the heart; for it is as impossible to perceive this infinite excellence and not to love it, as it is to behold natural beauty and not to admire it. Now they esteem God above every thing, and view him with reverential regard. They esteem him above father or mother, above all that the world calls great or good. They admire his discovered excellence, and see that he is infinitely worthy of the esteem and veneration of all his rational creatures. They likewise feel the strongest desires after him. With their souls they desire him in the night, and with their spirits within them they seek him early. They desire to know more of his glory, to be more conformed to his image, and to enjoy more intimate fellowship and communion with him. Nay, they delight in him as their portion and happiness, say-



ing, "Our Lord and our God, whom have we in heaven but thee, and there is none upon this earth our souls desire besides thee." Although this love is supreme in their hearts, yet they desire to have it strengthened and increased. For this purpose, they daily meditate upon him and his love, and thus labour to keep themselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. They feel themselves happy in the exercise of this grace, and know that their felicity will rise in proportion as it advances in their hearts. Sensible that it is weak and feeble, and bears no proportion to the loveliness and love of God, they are grieved that they love him so little, and earnestly desire to love him more. Hence they employ every appointed mean for increasing this divine affection in their hearts, and especially they pray unto God that he would shed it abroad in their hearts, by the Holy Ghost given unto them. Now this love unto God is such an essential ingredient in the character of his people, that those who are destitute of it, cannot be regarded as belonging unto him. They are under the curse: for "if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha." He is at present accursed, and if he remain in this situation, he shall be accursed at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. But, on the contrary, all those whose hearts glow with this sublime affection, are born of God, and belong unto him. Love is of God, and he that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. "I love them that love me," says Christ, speaking in the character of the personal wisdom of God, Prov. viii. 17, "and if any man love God," says Paul, 1 Cor. viii. 3, "the same is known of him;" is acknowledged by him as one of his people, and has interest in him as his God.

This love to God, then, distinguishes the people of God from nominal professors, and it is always accompanied with piety and universal holiness.

This leads us to observe in the fourth and last place upon this part of our subject, that all those who have the Lord for their God, *will worship and obey him*. This must naturally and necessarily follow from the principles we have considered as entering into their character. If we know God, and take him as our portion, if we love him with a supreme affection, and esteem him above every thing in this world, we must be necessarily led from these principles to worship and serve him. That God is to be worshipped must be admitted by all who believe in his existence, for to profess to believe that there is a God, and not to worship him, is to contradict our profession, and to live as practical atheists in the world. That the worship of God should be public and social, as well as private and secret, seems also to be a dictate of reason, and is confirmed by the express authority of Sacred Scripture. Even in heathen countries we behold places of worship dedicated to the service of Deity: we see altars rise, and man meeting to adore some divinity. As Christians, we are bound by the command of Scripture to assemble in the name of Christ, and are assured for our comfort, that wherever two or three are met together in his name, there he is in the midst of them, to bless them and to do them good. We are to worship God in secret, by entering into our closets and praying unto our Father who is in secret—we are to worship him in our families, and we are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is. Those who have the Lord for their God will pay attention to all these duties; they will express their love, and reverence, and gra-

titude to God, by engaging in the duties of devotion: in these they will be regular, serious, and cheerful; they will guard against formality and sloth, and study to worship God, who is a spirit, in spirit and in truth. They will likewise pay a sacred regard to all his other commandments—they will be afraid of offending him, and desirous to please him, and will hold sin and impiety in the utmost abhorrence. The laws of God will be written upon their hearts, and they will express their love unto him by their cheerful, constant, and universal obedience. Their hearts being enlarged with love, they will run the way of his commandments, and their duty will become their delight. Their obedience will be constant and uniform; it will not be confined to times or seasons, but will be exhibited in every place where they reside, in every situation in which they may be found, and in every period of their lives in this world. Being delivered out of the hand of their enemies, they will serve him in holiness and righteousness all the days of their lives. It will be extensive and universal obedience, reaching not to a few, but to all the commandments of God, which they will esteem according to all things to be right. While they do justice and love mercy, they will walk humbly with the Lord their God. Now, this worship and obedience are always represented in Scripture as essential to the character of the people of God. The Lord hath chosen the godly man for himself, and all his people call upon the name of the Lord. Jer. vii. 23—"Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people." In vain, therefore, do any of you imagine the Lord is your God, if you do not worship and obey him; "for ye are my friends," says Christ, "if ye do whatsoever I command you." This is the law of God that we



keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous. Having thus endeavoured to ascertain and illustrate the character of those whose God is the Lord, we are now brought forward,

II. To show you the happiness belonging to persons of this character.

And here, in the first place, we observe that they are happy because, having the Lord for their God, *they have in him a suitable and satisfying portion.* It is a maxim which will be admitted by all those who are acquainted with human nature, that in order to enjoyment, and consequently to happiness, there must be a correspondence between the faculty and the object. Every creature can receive happiness only from an object suited to its nature and capacity. The inhabitants of the ocean, cast forth on the most verdant plain, could derive no pleasure from its varied beauties, while those who tread the earth, or cleave the air, would die if plunged into the deep. Though we are fitted by our nature to live in this world as at present constituted, yet if transferred to another of the worlds that move round the sun, we would find its arrangements unsuited to our wants and desires, nay, to the whole mechanism of our body. Riches cannot still the clamour of an accusing conscience, nor can the most lovely and beautiful scenes of nature satisfy the cravings of the hungry soul. There must be, in short, a correspondence between the faculty and the object, in order to derive pleasure from it. Now, although man in the inferior part of his nature is allied to the animal creation, and capable of deriving gratification from sensible objects, yet he is also possessed of an intellectual nature, of a never-dying soul, which can find no enjoyment in things that are gross and ma-

terial. But as God is a spiritual being, and the father of our spirits, so he is possessed of infinite moral excellence, and must be a suitable portion unto the rational and moral nature of man. Light is not more suited to the eye, nor music to the ear; bread is not more suited to the hungry, nor water to the thirsty soul, than God is suited to be the portion of the soul of man: for as he has infinite intelligence to know, so he has infinite fulness to supply all our wants. As God is a suitable, so he is also a satisfying portion to the sons of men. It is evident from observation and experience, that the things of this world cannot satisfy the desires of the human soul. Whatever they may promise before they are enjoyed, experience convinces us of their vanity. Before we obtain them, we imagine they are able to make us happy, and give us perfect satisfaction; but we no sooner grasp them, than they wither in our hand, and disappoint our expectation. Inquire into the condition of the most prosperous and successful, who seem to have all the materials for happiness which this world can afford, if they are completely satisfied, and you shall find that there is still something wanting to perfect their happiness. It is not in the power of this world to render those who choose it as their portion perfect and happy. The most affluent and wealthy feel wants which all their wealth cannot supply, sorrows which it cannot soothe, and sufferings which it can neither mitigate nor remove. If one wish is gratified, a new demand arises, if one void is filled, another immediately opens; so that it is rather the expectation of what we have not obtained, than the enjoyment of what we possess, that occupies and interests the sons of men. As the objects of this world are beneath the dignity of the human soul, so God has

wisely mixed them with vanity, that we may not choose them as our portion. The eye is never satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing, nor is it in the power of any, nay, of all the things of this world to satisfy the heart of man. As no other portion but God is suited to the nature, so no other is satisfying to the desires and commensurate to the duration of the human soul. Give a man all that this world can bestow ; load him with riches, crown him with honour, surround him with pleasure, and invest him with absolute dominion ; in midst of all, he shall find it to be vanity ; and that without interest in God as his Lord, he cannot be happy. But the satisfaction which the soul cannot find in the world, it finds in God ; for he who made the heart can fill it, and render it as happy as its finite nature will permit. When the soul returns unto God through Jesus Christ ; when it is enlightened in his knowledge, and chooses him as its portion ; when it is brought to love God with a supreme affection ; then it enters into rest : for then, like the dove returned unto the ark, it finds that peace which it can nowhere else obtain. “ We who have believed,” says the Apostle, “ do enter into rest ; we are filled with joy and peace in believing.” The soul finds the infinite fulness of God more than sufficient to supply all its wants, to be all its salvation, and all its desire. It can no longer doubt either as to the fountain of felicity, or as to the sufficiency of God completely to satisfy it. More of God, indeed, the soul may desire to enjoy ; but more than God it is impossible to wish for, or enjoy. The soul no longer thirsts immoderately after the things of this world ; nor does the believer envy the men of the world, who know not God. On the contrary, he pities them and prays for them, and wishes them to share in that happiness which



he now enjoys. O, how happy are the persons whose God is the Lord! They have in him a suitable and satisfying portion, and their happiness rests upon the most solid foundations; for,

2d. They are happy, *because all the divine perfections shall be exerted in promoting and perfecting their felicity.* God is a being possessed of infinite perfection. All his attributes are amiable and glorious, and all of them shall be employed in advancing and establishing the happiness of his people. He finds the greatest satisfaction in exerting them for their benefit, for while the face of God is said in Scripture to be against the wicked, he looks upon the righteous with a pleasant countenance, and rejoices over them to do them good. If we survey all the perfections of Deity, whether natural or moral, we shall find that they open so many sources of happiness to his people. His power shall be exerted in defending them from the dangers to which they are exposed, in supporting them under the afflictions with which they are visited, and in preserving them in the way everlasting; for they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. His wisdom shall be employed in guiding them through this wilderness, and in conducting them through every dark and difficult step of their journey through life: for he will guide them by his counsel while here, as well as afterwards receive them to his glory. His goodness shall open its treasures to supply all their wants, and bestow upon them everything necessary for their comfort; for he will make all his goodness to pass before them; nay, he will make his goodness to follow them all the days of their lives in this world. His holiness shall sanctify their natures, and be a perpetual source of purity to their hearts; for as he is the Lord that

sanctifies them, so they shall be holy even as he is holy. His justice shall plead their cause, avenge the wrongs they may suffer, and justify them through the righteousness of Christ imputed unto them; for he is just, and the justifier of all those who believe in Jesus. His truth and faithfulness shall fulfil unto them all the great and precious promises which are written in his word; not one of them shall fail of final accomplishment, for they are all in Christ Jesus yea and amen unto the glory of God the Father. And his mercy shall pity them in their calamities, pardon their sins, and deliver them from their distresses; for he will keep his mercy for them for ever; in his love and in his pity he will redeem them, and bear them, and carry them, as in the days of old. His gracious presence shall be with them in every place where they may reside, and in every situation to which they may be reduced; for as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth and for ever. His omniscience shall watch over all their concerns, attend to the minutest circumstances that relate to them, and provide for their support in every situation. They have no reason, therefore, to be anxious about temporal comforts, for their heavenly Father knoweth that they need all these things. His immutability shall secure the continuance of their happiness, and his eternity shall render it everlasting. Thus you see that all the perfections of God are engaged in promoting the happiness of his people. A being possessed of these perfections must not only be able to make them happy, but when they are exerted for their benefit this happiness must be enjoyed by them. Every perfection opens up a separate source of happiness; and the streams flowing from all these sources,

when collected, must swell into a glorious river, to gladden the city of our God, and to bless its inhabitants with abundant and perpetual comfort. Well may we apply, then, unto the people of God the sublime language of Moses to ancient Israel, when describing their happiness, “Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee, and shall say, Destroy them.”

3d. Those who have the Lord for their God must be happy, *because their felicity is independent of this world, and may be enjoyed in every condition and situation of life.* The happiness arising from this world, is, like the world itself, of a transitory nature. It is not only short in its duration, but extremely uncertain in its continuance. Nothing is certain in this world but change: the seeds of alteration are everywhere sown around us, and the sunshine of prosperity commonly accelerates their growth. Worldly happiness, therefore, is transitory, and man changes of himself. He loses those faculties of enjoyment which are necessary to relish worldly pleasures, for the years soon draw nigh when he says, I have no pleasure in them. Besides, the sources of earthly joy may suddenly dry up, and although the power of enjoyment remains, the means of gratification may be removed. Riches make to themselves wings and flee away, as an eagle, towards heaven; honour is often blasted in the bud, and succeeded by degradation and disgrace; and all violent pleasures are short-lived and uncertain. Who can say, My mountain



stands strong, I shall never be moved; or, To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant? When any one imagines he has much goods laid up for many years, and that he may take his ease, eat, drink, and be merry, the Lord may say to him, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" But the happiness of those who have Jehovah for their God is independent of this world, and may be enjoyed in every condition of life. It may be enjoyed by the poor as well as by the rich, by the old as well as by the young, by the unfortunate as well as by the prosperous, by the afflicted and distressed as well as by those who are in health and ease. It springs from a higher source than this world, and rests upon a firmer foundation than it can lay. It flows from a heavenly fountain, and is therefore permanent; it is founded upon the Rock of ages, and is therefore secure. It can not only be enjoyed in the season of health and prosperity, when it adds an unspeakable relish to all our outward comforts; but it does not wither in the winter of adversity, for it then affords a most seasonable shelter. While it supports the falling, it improves the most flourishing state of man. When every earthly prop is removed it remains, and inspires the soul with a firmness which affliction cannot shake, nor death destroy. No distance can remove us from it, no enemy can deprive us of it, no time can make it tasteless, nor can any situation render it unseasonable. It accompanies the believer into solitude and exile; it smooths and softens the bed of affliction, and even strips death of all its terrors! It accompanied the Apostle John into the solitary isle of Patmos; it was with Paul and Silas in their prison, and inspired their midnight song of praise, which was heard with

astonishment by their keepers ; it was with the Apostle when persecuted, afflicted, and tormented, and in view of death it made him say, “ I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” It is a happiness which can support the soul in absence of all earthly comforts : for the believer can say, “ Although the fig-trees shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines ; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat ; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls : yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.” Now, how great must that happiness be, which is independent of this world, which is not subject to any mutation, which can be enjoyed in youth and in old age, in prosperity and in adversity, in life and at the hour of death ! How precious must that happiness be, which is not affected by the changes or storms of life, which lives when other comforts die, and affords relief unto the heart when nothing else can support it ! When deserted or forgotten by every other friend, his people are remembered by the Lord, his ear is open to their cry, and his hand stretched out for their comfort and assistance. When they are about to enter into the dark and silent valley of the shadow of death, they shall fear no evil, for he will be with them, and his rod and staff shall comfort them. Then they shall find this happiness strong in death, for though their heart and flesh shall then faint and fail them, God will be the strength of their heart and portion for ever. But this leads me to observe,

4th. Upon this part of the subject, that they who have the Lord for their God must be happy, *because their felicity shall be eternal.* Though

the happiness arising from this world were complete, perfectly suitable unto the nature, and satisfying unto the souls of men, yet it would soon come to a period; and hence it is that the men of the world complain so frequently of the shortness of human life. It is a happiness bounded by the grave, and which cannot exceed the fixed period of our continuance in this world. With many, however, it is of far shorter duration, and is always extremely transitory in its nature. Indeed, if the period of infancy, when no rational happiness can be enjoyed; of sickness and distress, when it cannot be tasted; and of old age, when it is no longer relished, were deducted from the life of man, the time of our enjoying worldly happiness must be confined to very narrow limits. This consideration, if duly attended to, might be sufficient to show us the vanity of worldly happiness. But the happiness of those who have Jehovah for their God, is not of a temporary nature. It lasts through time, but it is not terminated by it; it enters into eternity, and shall endure for ever; for the people of God shall obtain salvation with eternal glory. Were the most distant suspicion to enter into the minds of the redeemed that their happiness might come to a period, this thought would damp their spirits and diminish their joys; but they who possess this happiness know that it shall be everlasting, for as God in his infinite grace hath prepared it for them, so he hath assured them that it shall be eternal: for "the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." "These," says our blessed Redeemer, speaking of the righteous, Mat. xxv. 46, "shall go away into life eternal!" The riches, the honours, and the pleasures of this life are uncertain, but the treasure laid up for the righteous in heaven is "an enduring sub-



stance," Heb. x. 34, an eternal weight of glory. There moths do not corrupt, nor can thieves break through to steal. Their inheritance is incorruptible, undefiled, and it fadeth not away. The honours of this world are fleeting and transitory, but the crown of glory which shall be placed upon the heads of the saints in light, fadeth not away, and the kingdom which they shall inherit can never be moved. The pleasures of this world are short-lived and uncertain, but the pleasures which the redeemed shall experience in heaven are as permanent as they are pure. The sun which enlightens them shall never go down, the song they sing shall always be new, their capacity for enjoyment shall suffer no decay, and the pleasure they experience shall be increasing and eternal! All tears shall not only be wiped from their eyes, but they shall sit down by rivers of pleasure, and drink of them for evermore! They shall enjoy a happiness which shall satisfy every desire, silence every complaint—which shall be glorious in its nature and everlasting in its duration! When millions of ages have rolled away, this happiness shall only be commencing—a happiness large as their wishes, and lasting as the throne of God, from whence it proceeds.

It now only remains, that we conclude this subject with some application.

1st. From what has been said we may be led to inquire whether or not we are among the number of those whose God is the Lord. All who hear the gospel, and who profess themselves to be Christians are not of this number; for they are not all Israel who are of Israel. Now, in making this inquiry, we may be directed and assisted by what has been said in the former part of this discourse.

Are we possessed, then, of a true and saving knowledge of God in Christ, of a knowledge derived from the word and Spirit of God, which humbles us before him, makes us diligent in the use of the means of grace, and is accompanied with a corresponding practice? Under the influence of this knowledge have we chosen God in Christ for our portion, and do we give him the decided preference to every other object or enjoyment? Do we love God with a supreme affection, and is he the object of our highest delight? Can we say in truth, "Whom have we in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth we desire besides thee?" And are we expressing this love unto God by our devout worship and cheerful obedience? If our consciences tell us that this is our genuine character, then as we possess the peculiar characteristic feature of the people of God, we have reason to conclude that we belong unto him, and that the Lord is our God.

2d. From what has been said we may see how much they are mistaken who never take God into the estimate they make of happiness. As God is not in all the thoughts of the wicked, so in reckoning up the materials which in their apprehension are necessary to happiness, they never take the Supreme Being into the account. They imagine that the pleasures, riches, or honours of this world would make them happy, never considering that without interest in the favour of God through Jesus Christ, it is impossible that the possession of all these things could give them satisfaction. His favour alone is life, and his loving-kindness is better than life and all its enjoyments. Let the men of the world, then, learn to correct their mistake in this matter, while they may derive benefit from this correction. Let them consider that if they wish to be

happy, happiness is only to be found in God ; the surest and shortest way to happiness, therefore, is to choose God in Christ as our portion, to delight in him continually, and never to imagine that anything else is necessary to our felicity.

3d. From this subject you may see that the people of God ought not to envy the wicked of this world, even when they enjoy the greatest prosperity and abundance. This is a sin into which good men are apt to fall, and from which the Psalmist was not exempted, Ps. lxxiii. 3, 5, 12, "For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked;" for "they are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world; they increase in riches." A similar temper may have been felt by some of you who are the people of God, especially in the time of your affliction and distress. It is a sinful disposition, however, and ought by no means to be indulged. Ps. xxxvii. 1—"Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity: for they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb." God, in giving you himself as your portion, has given you more than if he had bestowed upon you the whole world. Wicked men have their part in this life, and shall you envy them this portion, while you are in possession of one infinitely superior? Why should you envy that prosperity which destroys them, or be displeased with that adversity which promotes your sanctification and salvation? Are not poverty and affliction with the presence of God and a good conscience preferable to wealth and health without them? Instead, therefore, of envying the wicked when prosperous and successful, be thankful unto God who hath shown you



the vanity of this world, and of all its enjoyments, and who hath enabled you by his grace to choose that good part which shall not be taken from you. "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him: and he shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noon-day."

4th. From this subject you may see the misery of those who have not the Lord for their God. If those are happy whose God is the Lord, they must be miserable who have no interest in him. Many of this character have no sense of their wretchedness, they are so stupified and brutalised with the pleasures of this world. They remain insensible to their situation, by banishing consideration and reflection. They dare not think of God, of death, or of eternity. If a wandering thought upon these subjects come into their minds, it damps their spirits, throws a gloom upon their countenances, and occasions a momentary melancholy. But they shall not always be able to live in forgetfulness of these things. Affliction will come and rouse them to reflection. In that season they will be destitute and forlorn, for they are strangers to the comforts of religion, and they have no shelter which can stand the storm of affliction, or afford them consolation in time of need. They cannot look to God as their protector; for they behold in him, not a friend to whom they can flee for succour, but a judge clothed in terror, and ready to punish them for their crimes. In this disconsolate situation death approaches them, and when they stand upon the verge of time and look forward into eternity, they shudder at the dark and dreadful prospect. Then they feel the insufficiency of all earthly comforts, and wish to look up to God as their friend, when they are conscious by their crimes they have made him their enemy. Fear in

this awful hour alarms them, terror agitates them, and despair overwhelms them. O that they were now sensible of their situation, that they might flee to that Saviour who is a refuge from the storm and a covert from the tempest—the consolation of Israel, and a present help in time of trouble !

5th. To conclude. From this subject you may see the necessity of Christians acting suitably to their profession, their privileges, and prospects. The people of God are often highly culpable in this respect. Their temper and conduct but little correspond with the privileges they enjoy, and hopes they entertain. Let them listen, then, to the exhortation of the Apostle, 1 Thess. ii. 12, see that ye “walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.” Do you profess to be the people of God ? Is that God whom the heavens cannot contain, and all their brightness but faintly represents, your God and portion ? Is his power your guardian, his wisdom your guide, and his fulness the treasury from whence you draw your supplies ? Do you entertain the well-founded hope of seeing his face in righteousness, and of being happy with him for ever in the future world ? What dignity of character, what elevation of sentiment, and what purity of conduct ought you then habitually to discover ? A cheerful, thankful, and contented frame of mind highly becomes you. Study to live as the sons of God, and the heirs of an heavenly inheritance. Let your lives be adorned with every christian grace and amiable virtue, especially with kindness and beneficence. Endeavour more and more to resemble the Lord you love, to be growing up unto Christ in all things, and to be perfect even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect. Press after higher degrees of holiness in heart and life ; for, if God is holy, how can you enjoy him

without resembling him in holiness? Meet every event with calmness and composure. Be not elated in prosperity, or dejected in adversity; but in your patience possess your souls. By your obedience and resignation, your peaceableness and meekness, your humility, contentment, and benevolence, and beneficence, show that you are the children of God, and happy in him as your Lord. By following him fully, let it appear that another spirit is in you than in the men of the world. Cleave unto him, and cultivate a growing acquaintance with him; and, under all your discouragements and fears, hear and believe his consolatory declaration, with which we conclude this discourse, Is. xli. 10, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Amen.



## SERMON X.

THE DAUGHTER OF ZION AND JERUSALEM CALLED  
UPON TO REJOICE GREATLY AT THE APPROACH  
OF HER GLORIOUS KING.

ZECH. ix. 9.

“ Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.”

THE coming of Christ into this world, as the Redeemer and King of his people, is the most joyful event to which the attention of mankind can be directed. Like the rising of the sun after a long night of darkness and tempest, this advent has diffused light, joy, and gladness, throughout the world. Prior to this period, Zion was obscured with clouds, and oppressed with enemies, but her hope was supported with the promise and prospect of a glorious Prince, who should reign in righteousness, and bless her with salvation. During the period of her distress, and even when she seemed to be on the decline, and about to be destroyed, her King was still upon his way, and the providence of God was overruling the revolutions of the nations for introducing his peaceful and happy reign. Accordingly, the prophet Zechariah does not coldly inform her of this event, but rapt into future times, and standing as it were upon Mount Olivet, beholding his approach, he addresses her in the animated and cheering language of the text, “ Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter

of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." Although these words originally refer unto Christ's entrance into Jerusalem in the manner recorded by the evangelists when he approached that metropolis in humble majesty, yet we are not at present to consider them in this limited light, but to view them in a more extended sense, as applicable unto the coming of Christ in the gospel, with the glad tidings of salvation unto every sinner, and especially unto his coming to the believer in the day of his power, when he enlightens his mind, purifies his heart, and fills him with joy and peace in believing. In farther treating of this subject, we propose,

I. To inquire who it is that is here addressed—the daughter of Zion and of Jerusalem.

II. To consider the duty which she is called upon to perform—she is to rejoice greatly and to shout.

III. To illustrate the arguments by which the performance of this duty is enforced—"behold, thy King cometh unto thee, who is just, and having salvation."

We shall then conclude with some application of the subject.

I. We are to inquire who it is that is here addressed—the daughter of Zion and of Jerusalem.

In general, then, let it be observed, that in the language of Scripture the daughter of any city signifies its inhabitants of every sex and condition. Upon this principle, the daughter of Zion or of Jerusalem, will signify the inhabitants of that celebrated metropolis, or the Jewish nation in general. This is plain from Lam. ii. 13—"What thing shall

I equal to thee, O virgin daughter of Zion? for thy breach is great like the sea; who can heal thee?" It was in this sense, also, that Christ said unto the Jewish women who followed him in tears, when he was going to be crucified, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children." But as the Jewish nation were a typical people, so Jerusalem was a typical city, and is frequently used in Scripture to represent the church of Christ in this world. This is not only evident from many passages which might be mentioned in the Old Testament, but from the two following in the New, which seem to put the matter beyond all reasonable doubt. Thus, the Apostle to the Hebrews, speaking of the privileges which Christians enjoy in consequence of their connection with Christ, says, Heb. xii. 22, "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem;" that is, through faith in Christ we are brought to spiritual communion with the New Testament church, which may be styled mount Zion, or the city of the new Jerusalem, which came down from heaven. Compare this passage with Gal. iv. 26, and you shall see the same sentiment illustrated and confirmed: "but Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." Here the church of Christ is styled Zion and Jerusalem, and real Christians her sons and daughters. By the daughter of Zion or of Jerusalem, therefore, we are to understand those who are connected with the visible church in this world, especially those who are born again, and made partakers of a divine nature, and who are seeking to be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law. All such feel ardent love unto Christ, and like affectionate children are interested in the peace and



prosperity of their mother, preferring the interests of Zion unto their chief earthly joys. Although, upon account of the situation of the church, and their own personal sins, they may experience days of sorrow and distress, yet they have cause at all times to rejoice, and to this joy they are invited in the text. But this naturally leads us,

II. To consider the duty which the daughter of Zion is called upon to perform—she is to rejoice greatly and to shout.

The christian system has been represented by its enemies as joyless and severe—as imposing unnatural restraints upon its votaries, and depriving them of innocent pleasures and rational enjoyment. No representation, however, can be more false or unfounded, for spiritual joy is essential unto the christian religion, and naturally springs from it. It is the spirit which the gospel inspires, as well as the duty which it enjoins, and is therefore equally the privilege and duty of every believer. The gospel is the glad tidings of great joy unto all people, and the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost. The children of Zion, indeed, are not permitted to indulge in sinful pleasures, or sensual delights, because these are noxious in their nature, and destructive of personal happiness. But they are allowed, nay commanded, to rejoice in Jesus Christ and in God through him, by whom they have now received the atonement. This joy is a pure and permanent principle. It enlarges the heart and enlivens the affections, and is necessary unto the proper performance of every duty. It makes obedience cheerful, supports our minds in the hour of sorrow, and strengthens our hearts to do or suffer the whole will of God. Hence the

joy of the Lord is emphatically styled in Scripture our strength. Though this joy is not always lively, yet it always lives, and sometimes rises to extacy and transport; so that the daughter of Zion, with Mary, magnifies the Lord, and her spirit rejoices in God her Saviour. Under the influence of this principle, she is enabled to say, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." But in order to distinguish this joy, the privilege and duty of the Christian, from the joy of the hypocrite and ungodly, it may not be improper shortly to contrast them.

1st. The joy of the real Christian is *founded in spiritual knowledge*, whereas that of the hypocrite and ungodly is *supported by the grossest ignorance*. An accurate knowledge of the doctrines of the gospel, especially of the person and propitiation of Jesus Christ, is the source of the purest and most rational joy unto the minds of Christians. Without this knowledge, they must be oppressed with fears, or perplexed with doubts, but its light will remove them, and diffuse serenity and gladness over all the powers of the mind. I cannot better illustrate this sentiment than by calling your attention to the situation of the Ethiopian eunuch, prior unto Philip's joining him in his chariot. Though he was then employed in reading the Old Testament prophecies, yet having none to guide him, he was in the dark. No sooner, however, did the light of the gospel shine into his mind, than it revived and cheered his heart. The clouds of ignorance which obscured his view were

dispelled, a cheerful day dawned upon his mind, a new sun seemed to arise, a new glory shone around him, every object brightened to his view, and we are told, Acts viii. 39, that "he went on his way rejoicing." Thus you see that the Christian's joy is founded in spiritual knowledge; while, on the contrary, the joy of the hypocrite and ungodly is supported by the grossest ignorance. Though they may be men of profound intellectual abilities, and extremely intelligent upon various other subjects, yet, untaught of God, they must remain ignorant of him, and of the glorious and peculiar doctrines of the everlasting gospel. The cross of Christ, therefore, will appear unto them as it did unto the learned Greeks, to be foolishness, and its mysteries to be irrational and absurd. Though the gospel is revealed and preached, it will be hid unto them: for the god of this world blinds the minds of those that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel should shine unto them. If such persons, therefore, upon any occasion experience a kind of joy, it must arise from ignorance of God, of themselves, and the gospel, and consequently be entirely different from the joy of the Christian, which is built upon spiritual knowledge. Concerning such persons we may justly say, in the words of the Psalmist, Ps. lxxxii. 5, "They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness."

2d. The joy of the Christian springs from *a firm faith in Christ and the doctrines of the gospel*, whereas that of the hypocrite and ungodly arises from *presumption and unbelief*. Faith, which is a fundamental principle in the christian religion, is the source of the purest joy to the mind of the believer in every scene of sorrow. In order to derive comfort from the doctrines of the gospel,



it is not only necessary that they be known ; it is also requisite that they be firmly believed. Without this faith, indeed, we may amuse ourselves with empty speculations concerning them, but we can derive no solid consolation from them. Hence it is that in Scripture the Christian's joy is emphatically styled, Phil. i. 25, the joy of faith ; and when the Apostle prays for this blessing unto the Romans, he prays for it as the fruit of faith, saying, Rom. xv. 13, " Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing." The Apostle Peter expresses the same sentiment when he says, 1 Pet. i. 8, " Whom having not seen, ye love ; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." The Christian's joy, therefore, springs from faith, and bears an exact proportion unto its strength in the heart. The false joy of the nominal professor, on the contrary, arises from presumption or unbelief. Boldly applying the promises of the gospel unto himself, while he disbelieves its doctrines or disregards its precepts, and feeling, perhaps, some temporary emotion and delight on hearing the word or attending upon ordinances, he hastily concludes that his state must be good because his feelings are ardent and lively. Let us always, therefore, suspect that joy which does not spring from the faith of the gospel, which separates duty and privilege, and which, although it may engage the affections, neither purifies the heart nor sanctifies the life : which naturally leads me to observe,

3d. That the joy of the people of God is associated with *godly sorrow, deep humility, and cheerful obedience*, while that of the nominal Christian flows from *a hard heart, and is not unfrequently attended with spiritual pride, and ha-*

*bitual disobedience.* Godly sorrow is so far from being inconsistent with spiritual joy, that it is always associated with it: so the tears of this sorrow are the seeds of sacred joy, for they who thus sow in tears shall reap in joy. While this joy humbles the people of God, and fills them with admiring views of the divine condescension, it, at the same time, strengthens and enlarges their hearts to run the way of his commandments. On the contrary, the joy which a nominal professor or hypocrite may experience, leaves the heart as the water did the rock in the wilderness—cold, hard, and impenitent. It is, moreover, a joy accompanied with pride and self-confidence, and never excites to cordial and universal obedience. The person who feels it has a high opinion of his own knowledge, experience, and attainments, and in his heart is apt to despise the humble and mourning Christian. This false joy is perfectly consistent with secret sin, with neglect of duty, and disobedience unto the laws of heaven. From what has been stated, you may easily distinguish between that spiritual and genuine joy which is the privilege and duty of the real Christian, and that false delight or elevation of mind which is competent unto the hollow and hypocritical professor. The former springs from spiritual knowledge, true faith, and godly sorrow, and is always accompanied with humility and obedience; while the latter is founded upon ignorance, presumption, and unbelief, and is generally attended with pride and disobedience. The Christian's joy, therefore, is pure and rational, is strong and permanent, and possesses the nature of the joys of heaven. It is a joy of which no distress can deprive him, and from which no distance can remove him—which no time can weaken, and which death cannot destroy.

When every earthly joy shall die this spiritual joy shall live; nay, the death of other joys frequently tends to strengthen and exalt it. Under affliction and persecution it is often most sensibly felt; it then rises to extacy and transport, affording a pleasing anticipation of the joys of heaven, being a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

III. We now proceed to illustrate the arguments by which the performance of this duty is enforced: she is called upon to rejoice, because her King cometh unto her, who “is just, and having salvation.”

1st. The daughter of Zion is to rejoice, *because her King cometh unto her*. We are assured in Scripture that Zion was to have her king, and that unto this dignity he was appointed by God himself, who declares, Ps. ii. 6, “I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion,” and he shall reign even in the midst of his enemies. Prophets, too, in the name of the Lord had announced his approach, and Zion, therefore, had long expected his appearance, and waited for his coming. At last the destined period arrives—and, lo! this King appears, not surrounded with external pomp and splendour, as some had vainly expected, but with the humble majesty of the Son of God. His birth is announced by the message of an angel, and celebrated with the songs of a heavenly host. Wise men, guided by a star, came from the east to worship him, and to make him presents; and his birth and appearance were matter of joy unto all who looked for redemption in Israel. When he entered upon the public execution of his office he spent his life in delivering men from the power of ignorance; and, when he came at last into Jerusalem in the humble majesty represented in the text, we are told that



the multitude that went before and that followed, cried, "Hosanna, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." But if the approach of this King unto Zion was the occasion of so much joy, what gladness will be felt and discovered by his people when as their heavenly King he makes a spiritual approach unto them—opens the doors of their hearts, the eyes of their understandings being enlightened and opened to receive him as their Saviour! What joy will they experience when he comes unto them, imparting just views of God and divine truth, and diffusing new light over all the powers of their mind; when he comes unto them, discovering himself as the only sacrifice for their sins; and when he approaches them as their glorious King, subduing the enmity of their hearts, and making them willing to submit to his righteousness, laws, and government, and to his authority founded on his perfect sacrifice! This spiritual approach of Christ, the King of Zion, unto his people, is the foundation of the purest and most elevated joy; for the day of their espousals is the day of the gladness of their hearts, and every new approach, after a partial or temporary departure, will occasion a new and increasing joy.

2d. The daughter of Zion is to rejoice, because this King who cometh unto her is *just, perfectly holy in his nature, and righteous in the whole of his administration*. By this honourable title he is frequently characterized in Sacred Scripture. "Behold, the days come," says Jeremiah, "that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and this is his name whereby he shall be called, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.**" Peter styles him, Acts iii. 14, "the Holy One and the Just;" and Stephen, with his dying breath, emphatically calls him

the "Just One." He is holy, harmless, and undefiled, separate from sin or sinners; for though he conversed with a sinful world, he contracted no pollution by his intercourse with it, but, like the light, passed through it with perfect purity. Now, in the spotless purity of Christ, the Christian has reason to rejoice, because, without this, he could not have been qualified to answer the demands of law, and to redeem his people by his blood. The regal power of Christ is founded upon his priestly character; for, according to the tenor of the covenant, it behoved him to redeem by his blood those subjects he was to rule and govern by his word and spirit. But how could he have effected this purchase unless he had been perfectly holy? Had he been unjust or guilty, his obedience or sufferings unto death would have been of no avail—they could not have atoned for his own sins, and far less could they have merited redemption for the sins of his people. But being the Holy One and the Just, and being made voluntarily under the law for his people, he obeyed its precepts in its utmost extent, and bore the penalty due unto the sins of his people, by suffering the just for them the unjust, that he might bring them unto God. And is not this matter of high joy unto the daughter of Zion? Here she beholds a righteousness wrought out by the Holy One and the Just, magnifying unto the law, and satisfying unto the justice of God, and "which is unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference." When this righteousness is apprehended by faith and imputed by grace, the believer is justified in the sight of God, and can say with the ancient church, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength, and in him will I ever glory." What joy must this occasion unto the believing soul! Does the debtor

rejoice in having his debts cancelled? do the naked rejoice in being clothed? do the guilty rejoice in being freely pardoned? and must not the Christian rejoice in being justified freely by grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus? Rejoicing in the person and righteousness of the Just One, will he not express the feelings of his heart in the language of the church, Is. lxi. 10, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness?" But we observe that the term just might also intimate that Christ, as the King of Zion, is righteous in the administration of his government. Zeph. iii. 5—"The just Lord is in the midst of her; he will do no iniquity." As the King of Zion, he prescribes just laws for the regulation of his people's conduct; he governs his subjects with equity, and will reward or punish them according to their character and works. The measures of his administration are just and righteous; he exercises no unnecessary severities; when he corrects, it is in mercy; when he punishes, it is less than is deserved; and when he restrains, it is only from those evils which are hurtful unto the individual and pernicious unto society. Allegiance unto his government, therefore, is attachment to our own interest; and submission to his will is the way to life and happiness. If we have had fathers according to the flesh who corrected us, and we gave them reverence, shall we not be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? Injustice and oppression of every kind are repugnant to his nature, and inconsistent with his government. He condemns them in others, and he will not practise them himself. Although some of his subjects,



therefore, in their ignorance or unbelief, may think or say that their way is hid from the Lord, and their judgment passed over from their God, yet they shall be obliged at length to acknowledge that justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne, and that mercy, accompanied with truth, continually go before his face. May not, must not the daughter of Zion, then, rejoice in her Lord and King. If it is a peculiar felicity to live under the government of a just and righteous prince, who rules according to law, and who invariably consults the good of his subjects, what must be the happiness of living under the administration of the righteous Ruler of Zion, who is just in all his ways, and holy in his works! Rejoicing in this King, may not the daughter of Zion, even in this world, adopt the song of Moses and the Lamb, saying, Rev. xv. 3, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints!"

3d. The daughter of Zion is to rejoice because her King who cometh unto her is not only just, but likewise *has salvation*. This is an astonishing union, which may well excite the wonder and the joy of every believer. A just God, and a Saviour! Salvation not only consistent with justice, but dispensed in such a manner as to display its brightest glory! Salvation is a deliverance from danger, or from death, and always has a reference unto a prior state of guilt and misery. In this situation, all the sons of men are unhappily involved, and the daughter of Zion in common with others. Before she actually came unto Christ, therefore, she not only stood in need of this salvation, but even after this period fresh communications of grace are so necessary that without them she could not live and be happy a single moment. Here, then, is a

sure ground of joy unto her heart. Christ Jesus her glorious King has all that salvation which she needs or can desire. He has it as the sole proprietor of it, in consequence of his own purchase; he has it as appointed by the Father to dispense it unto the sons of men, and he has it, as there are inexhaustible treasures of mercy and grace in his hand to supply the wants of all his people. Let us illustrate each of these ideas a little. First, we say Christ has salvation because he is the sole proprietor of it, in consequence of his own purchase. By sin, we have not only forfeited every favour, but exposed ourselves to the divine displeasure. Although salvation originates in the sovereign love of God, which cannot be purchased by us; yet, according to the divine constitution, all the blessings of salvation were to be purchased for us by the death of Christ. By sin and disobedience they were lost; by the obedience and sufferings of Christ, even unto death, they were to be regained. The death of Christ, therefore, may be considered in two very important points of view. It may be regarded not only as a complete atonement for sin, but as an invaluable price by which he ransomed his people from destruction, and procured for them every necessary and spiritual blessing. Both of these arise from the infinite dignity of his person, and the merit of his sufferings, even unto death. His death, or blood, is the price he paid for the blessings of salvation, and therefore they may with great propriety be said to be his property. This sentiment might be illustrated and confirmed by taking a short review of these blessings, and by showing you that they are all received and enjoyed by the believer as the purchase of our Saviour's death. Are his sins forgiven? and is not pardon purchased by the blood of Christ?

“In whom,” says the Apostle, “we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of his grace.” Does he enjoy peace with God, or peace of conscience? This too is the fruit of our Saviour’s purchase. He made peace by the blood of his cross, and left it as a precious legacy unto his people. “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” Is he delivered from the power of all his enemies, and will he be ransomed from the power of his last enemy, death, and have a way opened from the grave to glory? This is also the effect of his Saviour’s death, for by dying he has destroyed death, and him that had the power of it. Finally, will the believer at last be admitted into heaven, and obtain salvation with eternal glory? He shall enter there through the merit of his Saviour’s blood, for eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus. Now, if all the blessings of salvation are purchased by the death of Christ, as from this short review is evident, and if purchase is always connected with property, then must it not follow that salvation with great justness may be said to belong unto Christ, or that he has it as his property, in consequence of this purchase? Yes, he has salvation as the sole proprietor of it. It is of the Lord, and belongs unto him. He has it, not for his own benefit or advantage, for in this respect he has no need of it, but he has it freely to bestow upon all his subjects and servants; for the gift of God is eternal life, and this life is in his Son. But this naturally leads us to the second idea suggested by this expression—he has salvation; namely, that he has it, inasmuch as he is appointed by the Father to dispense it unto the sons of men.



As Christ Jesus has purchased the blessings of salvation by his blood, so it seems to be highly proper that he should be employed in conferring them upon the objects of his love. Accordingly, we are taught in Scripture that he is exalted as a Prince and Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel and the remission of sin. He is constituted the great and sole dispenser of all purchased blessings, for we are blessed in Christ Jesus with every precious and spiritual blessing. Upon this principle he declares concerning himself,—“ I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish ; nor shall any pluck them out of my hand.” As Joseph not only purchased the corn from the people in the land of Egypt during the years of plenty, but was appointed by Pharaoh the sole distributor of these treasures unto his subjects ; so Christ Jesus, our spiritual Joseph, not only purchased salvation by his death, but lives to confer upon his people the blessings he purchased by his blood. This honour is conferred upon him, and belongs unto him. He is the only channel of divine communication, and from his heavenly hand we must receive every good and spiritual gift. As the Egyptians were desired in their straits to have recourse unto Joseph, who would supply all their wants ; so sinners, who are poor and needy, are directed to apply unto Christ, who is constituted by God the dispenser of the blessings of grace unto all who come unto him. He is the way, the truth, and the life ; to him we must come to obtain the supply of all our wants, for it is out of his fulness alone that we can receive, and grace for grace, and this grace is still sufficient for us. But this naturally leads us to the third idea included in this expression—he has salvation ; namely, that there are inexhaustible treasures of mercy and grace in his hand to supply the wants

of all his people. It has pleased the Father that in Christ Jesus all fulness should dwell ; a fulness of merit for the forgiveness of all our sins—of the Spirit, for the sanctification of our natures—of grace, for assistance in duty, or support under trial—and of glory, to render his subjects happy in time and through eternity. This fulness is absolutely inexhaustible. It is neither diminished by communication, nor increased by restraint, but remains invariably the same, and perfectly adequate to supply all our wants. This fulness is not deposited in him for his own benefit or happiness, but is intended to afford suitable supplies unto the spiritual wants of all his subjects. As there is a fulness of light in the sun for the illumination and benefit of the material world, which is not impaired by the rays he has emitted since placed by the Creator in the firmament of heaven—as there is a fulness of water in the ocean for the supply of rain to refresh and fertilize the earth ; so there is a fulness of spiritual blessings in Christ for the comfort and salvation of all his people. From this inexhaustible treasure thousands have received mercy and salvation, and it is still as full as the first moment it was opened unto the sons of men. His mercy is as rich to pardon, and his Spirit as powerful to sanctify, and his grace is as sufficient to help, as the first moment they exerted their energy in the salvation of the sons of men. Still it is true, and how comfortable is the truth, that there is mercy with him that he may be feared, and plenteous redemption that he may be sought unto. His riches are unsearchable riches, and open a door of hope unto every sinner. If any sinner then perish under the gospel, it is not because the blood of Christ is unable to save him, but because he tramples this blood under foot, and accounts it an un-

holy thing. "Ye will not come unto me," said Christ unto the Jews who despised him, "that ye may have life;" and the same language may be applied unto all those who only hear the gospel to despise it. If sinners remain under guilt and pollution—if they continue naked and miserable—it is not because no fountain has been opened for sin and for uncleanness, or because there is no provision made for their being clothed and made happy; but it is because they will not be counselled by Christ to buy of him gold tried in the fire that they may be made rich, and white raiment that their nakedness may not appear; it is because they despise and neglect his great salvation. Christ still has salvation to bestow; he is able to save unto the uttermost, and is more ready to give than any are to ask of him. He has salvation! What a source of joy unto the daughter of Zion! Salvation from every evil, in every season, and through every age. She was in need of salvation when she first came to the Saviour, she still needs it, and she rejoices that her Lord and King has it to bestow upon her in its utmost extent and perfection; for Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an *everlasting salvation!*

4th and lastly. The daughter of Zion is to rejoice, because this King who cometh unto her is *lowly and condescending*. Humility is allowed to be an ornament in every character, especially when it is displayed by persons of exalted dignity and rank. When we think of the lowliness and humility of Christ, our minds are overpowered, for we are unable to form adequate conceptions of their greatness and excellence. In order to have as just conceptions of them as possible, we must think of his original and essential dignity—of the assumption of our nature into union with his divine person—of his



condescending conduct while he tabernacled upon this earth, and of his sufferings even unto death. His humility is beautifully expressed and contrasted with his original dignity by the Apostle, when he says, Phil. ii. 5—8, “ Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus : who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God ; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men : and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Happy in himself and in his Father’s love, how astonishing his condescension in assuming our low nature, with all its sinless infirmities ! “ Verily he took not on him the nature of angels ; but he took on him the seed of Abraham, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.” But if he had determined to assume our nature, and to appear in this world, might he not have assumed it in some superior station, and appeared, at least, in royal dignity ? He appears, however, in a mean and suffering form. No outward splendour attends his entry upon life : he is born in a stable, he is laid in a manger, and poverty and reproach continually followed him. His humble soul possessed no aspiring or ambitious views ; for when the people, struck with his miracles, would have come by force and made him a king, he went away into a desert place. In the whole of his deportment during life he was lowly and condescending. He did not court the society of the great, but condescended unto men of low estate. He conversed freely with all who came unto him, and despised not the meanest of the people. Far from discovering that stern and

haughty temper which despises poverty and forbids access, he invited the poor and the mean to come unto him, and showed them the greatest kindness and condescension. He was more kind and condescending than his disciples, for he received those whom they rejected or forbade to draw near unto him. Thus, when they reprov'd a poor blind man who cried after him, "Lord, thou son of David, have mercy on me," he stops in his journey, commands him to be brought into his presence, and with condescending benevolence asked him, "what wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" Thus, he was great in his humility, and humble amid his greatness! But not only to the world in general, but to his disciples in particular, he discovered the most striking proofs of humility and condescension. He treated them with the utmost gentleness; his reproofs were mild, when their provocations were great. He bore with their ignorance and prejudices, and even deigned to wash their feet, hereby setting them an example of humility and condescension. His last entrance into Jerusalem affords another striking instance of his lowliness and humility. Instead of approaching that celebrated capital with the pomp of greatness, or the ensigns of majesty, he came in the humble manner represented in the text, fulfilling the Scripture, and accomplishing the salvation of the sons of men. He permitted himself to be apprehended, and to be led away by the meanest of the people. With mute humility he stood before his august judge, and calmly submitted to every insult which the malice of men could offer him, and at last finished his course, by humbling himself, and becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross! Say now, is not this King of Zion lowly and condescending? and what reason has

the daughter of Zion to rejoice in him! Some princes are surrounded with such splendour, and assume such state, that they cannot be approached by the meanest of their subjects; and others are so high and haughty, that they refuse to listen to the just complaints of their people. But Christ, the King of Zion, is humble and accessible. He stoops from his throne to listen to the dwellers in the humblest cottage. He admits the meanest of his subjects into his presence, hears their complaints, listens to their sighs and groans, nay, with unparalleled condescension, comes to dwell in their hearts. "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." And that this description applies unto Christ is evident from his own words, John xiv. 23, "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Happy the soul in which Christ dwells in this world! Its happiness shall be progressive, and shall be consummated in dwelling for ever with the Lord in the world that is to come.

It only now remains that we conclude with some application of the subject.

1st. From what has been said you may see cause for joy unto all the hearers of the gospel. You have reason to rejoice, sinners, that Christ comes unto you to-day in the gospel, and that he has salvation freely to bestow—a salvation suited unto your misery, and calculated to render you completely happy. But, oh, consider that Christ's having this salvation will be of no avail unto you, if it become not yours by receiving it, for it is



only to as many as receive him, that he gives power to become the sons of God, even unto those that believe on his name. If you will not accept of this salvation, you are guilty of cruelty unto yourselves, ingratitude unto your benefactor, and rebellion against your Lord; and how shall you escape if you neglect so great salvation? Behold, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation; now Christ has salvation to bestow, but if you despise it to-day, you may fall under condemnation to-morrow!

2d. From this subject you may be led to inquire whether or not you are the spiritual children of Zion. You are connected with the visible church, and, in consequence of this connection, are entitled to external privileges. But are you born again, and born of God, and connected with his holy and happy family? Has Christ come unto you as your prophet, priest, and king? Has he made you willing in a day of his power to submit unto him as your Lord? have you received him with humility and gratitude? and was this acceptance entire and unreserved? Did it extend unto all his offices? and do you now rejoice in him, not only as your teacher and atonement, but also as your King? Do you feel the power of his grace subduing your corruptions, and bringing every thought into obedience to his will? Do you love him with supreme affection, and all his people with pure hearts fervently? Are you dutiful and loyal subjects unto the King of Zion—attached unto his person, government, and laws, and preferring Jerusalem unto your chief earthly joys? If this be your character and these your dispositions, then you have reason to believe that you are the sons of God and the spiritual children of Zion, and may be assured that he who has begun the good

work will perfect and carry it on to the day of Christ.

3d. From what has been said you may see something of the glory and excellency of Jesus Christ. He is so glorious that no language can describe his majesty, nor can any mind but his own conceive it. In his person how amiable, in his offices how suitable, and in his conduct how gracious and condescending! In him are united a majesty and mildness—a greatness and goodness, which are peculiar unto him, and which render him the chief among ten thousands, and altogether lovely. He is a just God and a Saviour; higher than the heavens, and yet, for the suffering of death, made a little lower than the angels. How excellent is his name in all the earth, and how good is it before the saints! What king is like unto him in the greatness of his power, the depth of his wisdom, the extent of his kingdom, the equity of his government, the number of his subjects, the nature of his conquests, the splendour of his court, the magnificence of his palace, and amid all this greatness in the lowliness and humility of his mind? Let all the children of Zion be joyful in this King, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.

4th. From what has been said you may see the peculiar happiness of all the inhabitants of Zion, and the subjects of Christ's spiritual kingdom. With much greater propriety it may be said of them than it was said by the queen of Sheba of Solomon's servants, 1 Kings x. 8, "Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom." In whatever situation they may be placed as to this world, they may always trust and triumph in Christ Jesus. Zion which they inhabit

is a fair and blessed city, the joy of the whole earth. Her habitations are palaces, and all her inhabitants princes. The influences of heaven, like the morning dew, descend upon her silent and refreshing. The streams of the river of God gladden this city—the divine presence fills it with glory, and divine providence, like a wall of fire, continually surrounds it. In the courts of Zion this heavenly King meets and blesses his people, and there his glory shines. There he is found of those that seek him—there the light of divine truth goes not out, and there the bread of life is exhibited for the nourishment and support of all its inhabitants. May we not say then of all the inhabitants of Zion, what Moses said of Israel of old, Deut. xxxiii. 29, “Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.”

5th. To conclude. From what has been said you may also learn what is the duty to which the children of Zion are this day called—they are to rejoice greatly in their King. “Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous, and be glad in him, all ye upright in heart.” This is indeed their duty and privilege every day, but especially upon a communion sabbath, when they are permitted to draw near unto him, and to behold his glory. To-day you are invited to come into his presence-chamber, and to go unto his table to remember the wonders of his love. He who now rules you by his power redeemed you by his blood, and this redemption you are to remember till he come again. He who is dead is now alive, and behold he lives for evermore, having the keys of hell and death. Did you



not rejoice when he first came into your hearts and erected there his throne? Since that happy period has he not often blessed you with bright discoveries of his grace? and, behold, to-day he comes into his banqueting-house and invites you with joy to approach unto him. And shall you not comply with his gracious invitation? shall you not put honour on your Lord, and with pleasure approach unto him as your King? shall you not now declare in the most public manner that Jesus, the King of Zion, is the source of your joy, and the subject of your triumph—that you glory in his cross and in his crown, in his person and in his government—and that he is your light and life, your consolation, and joy, and all? And while you remember the wonders of his love, you are permitted to look forward with transport to that happy period when he shall come without sin unto your complete salvation. Then he will be glorified in his saints, and admired of all them that believe. Then all his loving subjects shall press around his standard, and the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads, and so they shall for ever be with the Lord. Amen.

## SERMON XI.

### THE GLORIOUS INHERITANCE OF THE PEOPLE OF JESUS CHRIST.

1 PET. i. 3—5.

“ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.”

THE evidence which unassisted reason affords for the existence of a future state is at least doubtful and unsatisfactory. When we consider the nature of the human soul, and its noble powers and faculties, which seem to be capable of endless improvement; when we advert to the moral government of God in the world, and compare it with his attributes of justice and benevolence, and especially when we reflect upon the natural desire of immortality implanted in our minds by the Author of our being, it seems reasonable to conclude that there will be a future state, where this desire will be gratified, and where God shall render to every man according to his works. Accordingly, we find that a belief of this kind has in some measure prevailed in all ages and nations upon the face of the earth. But although the belief of future existence has generally obtained in the world, yet reason alone is unable to ascertain its absolute certainty, and disperse the darkness resting upon it. It remained therefore for the discoveries of the gospel

to remove the obscurity in which it was involved, and to bring life and immortality clearly to light. The Sun of righteousness has now arisen, dispelling the clouds which the eye of reason could not penetrate, and shedding light upon the regions beyond the grave. These disclosures have not only ascertained the reality of a state of future happiness, but exhibit to us the character of those who shall finally enjoy it. When Christians contemplate these important truths, so essential to their comfort and happiness in this world, and when they have a well-founded hope of personal interest in the heavenly inheritance, their hearts must be warmed with lively gratitude, and they will express their pious feelings in the animated language of our text—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." The illustration of the passage leads us,

I. To contemplate the nature and qualities of the Christian's future inheritance.

II. To state the grounds upon which he rests his hope of enjoying this inheritance.

III. To show you the evidence of his possessing this lively hope.

We shall then conclude with some improvement of what may be advanced.

I. Let us contemplate the nature and qualities of the Christian's future inheritance. With respect to the nature of this inheritance, or wherein



in general it consists, it may be observed that the inheritance is God himself, with the happiness he has prepared for his people in a future and eternal world. Ps. xvi. 5—"The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup." What a satisfying portion! what a rich and glorious inheritance! But this will be more apparent if we attend to the distinguishing qualities of this inheritance.

1st. With this view, then, we observe, in the first place, that it is *heavenly and secure*. It is an inheritance in heaven, and it is reserved for the righteous. It is an inheritance consisting in nothing that is gross and earthly. It is true, all things are theirs—they inherit all things, and all things shall work together for their good, for they have the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come, and a blessing rests upon all they possess. But still their future inheritance is not of this world, nor does it consist of earthly perishing possessions. Were the Lord to give them the whole world for their inheritance, it would neither be suitable to their nature, nor satisfying to their soul. It is therefore a heavenly inheritance, consisting in spiritual blessings and future celestial enjoyments. It is, moreover, as safe as it is excellent; for it is reserved in heaven for them. In this world, we see that uncertainty is connected with all earthly possessions. Riches are uncertain—they make unto themselves wings and fly away, as an eagle toward heaven. Wealth and large possessions may be acquired by persevering industry, and secured to heirs by every method which ingenuity can devise or prudence employ; and yet, after every precaution has been used, they are precarious and uncertain. Fraud and injustice may deprive us of them, or the strong hand

of power may wrench them from us ; a fire may consume them, the flood may overflow them, or a revolution may remove them from us, and confer them upon others. If none of these things should take place, the heirs themselves, being mortal, may be arrested by the hand of death, and summoned into the eternal world before the time fixed for their entering upon them has arrived. How many instances of this nature are we constantly witnessing, convincing us, if we would be convinced, of the precarious nature of all earthly property, possessions, and enjoyments ! But the heavenly inheritance which belongs to the children of God, and which they are destined to enjoy, is as safe as it is excellent. It is reserved for them in heaven, it is laid up for them there, and therefore is beyond the reach of every accident, and the power of all their enemies. No thief can break through to steal it from them ; no fraud or violence can wrest it from them ; no fire can consume it ; nay, the flame which shall burn up the earth and the works which are therein, shall not destroy it. The combined power of all hostile creatures cannot overcome the power of the Almighty, and therefore it is an inheritance as safe as omnipotence can make it. But it must be borne in mind, that the inheritance is not only reserved for the heir, but the heir is also kept by the power of God for the inheritance ; and death which removes worldly men from their possessions shall only transmit the children of God to the heavenly world, to enter upon the full possession of their celestial inheritance.

2d. This inheritance is *incorruptible*. Every thing we behold in this world being material, is corruptible, or liable to a dissolution of its parts. All compound bodies are subject to this general law.

Some of them dissolve sooner and others of them more slowly, but none of them are free from corruptibility and decay. The visible heavens themselves are not exempted from this natural tendency; and, accordingly, the inspired penman writes, saying, Ps. cii. 25, 26, "Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment: as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed." The hardest substances may be dissolved or dissipated, plants and vegetables soon begin to corrupt, and all the animals that live in the earth or seas are subject to dissolution. Every material body is perishing, everything that grows declines, and everything that lives dies. Here moth and rust do corrupt, and therefore all worldly objects and possessions are susceptible of destruction, and perishing in their nature. But the inheritance of the saints in light is possessed of a nobler quality; for it is absolutely incorruptible, or not subject to any dissolution of its parts. God, who is the inheritance of his people, is the incorruptible God. The mansions they inhabit, the objects they behold, and the blessed society with which they mingle, are all incorruptible, and eternal in the heavens. As the heavenly inheritance in itself is incorruptible, so nothing that can impart corruptibility shall ever be introduced, or even permitted to approach the blessed abodes of the righteous. The souls of the saints, before they enter upon this inheritance, shall be made perfect in holiness, and their bodies, at the resurrection, shall be made spiritual bodies; for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. This corruptible, therefore, shall put on incorrup-



tion, and this mortal shall put on immortality ; and then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, "death is swallowed up in victory." Blessed inheritance, and happy abode ! Here the inheritance and the heir, the house and the inhabitant are both corruptible ; but in heaven the inheritance and the heir, the house and the inhabitant are incorruptible, and therefore immortal and eternal. They are free from every principle of dissolution, and therefore they must be everlasting in their duration.

3d. It is another distinguishing property of this inheritance that it is *undefiled*. This world was originally the abode of innocence and of purity, but it is now stained with sin, and polluted by iniquity. Sin is moral pollution ; and this pollution has defiled not only the whole man, but the whole world. Man being a sinner carries defilement with him wherever he goes. Whatever he touches he taints. He breathes infectious air, and he carries contagion with him into every place he visits, and into every society with which he mingles. What is the multiplication of our species, or what the intercourse of human society, but the propagation and extension of the empire of impurity ? The world, therefore, is defiled by the sins of those who dwell upon it. Our earthly possessions and enjoyments are contaminated and debased by moral pollution, and are therefore become vain and unsatisfactory. Hence, we are admonished in Scripture, Mic. ii. 10, to arise and depart from this world, for it is not our rest, being polluted, and because if we cleave to it as our portion it will destroy us with a sore destruction. But although sin pollutes and poisons all our earthly pleasures and enjoyments, yet the inheritance of the righteous in a future world is of a dif-

ferent character, for it is pure and undefiled. God who dwells there, and is the portion of his people, is the Most High and Holy God. The objects which are presented to their contemplation are undefiled objects, the inhabitants with whom they associate are holy inhabitants, the exercises in which they engage are holy exercises, and the pleasures which they taste are pure and unmingled pleasures. The inheritance in itself is not only undefiled in its nature, but nothing that defileth shall ever be permitted to enter into the abodes of the blessed, for, Rev. xxi. 27, "There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life;" and all who are registered in that book are holy. Though believers in this world are sanctified, their purification is imperfect, they still feel remaining defilement within them, and they meet with pollution from without, and are therefore ever ready to fall into the commission of sin. But in heaven they shall not only be made perfectly holy in their own persons, but they shall be freed from all external defilement which can have the smallest tendency to lead them to any sinful indulgence. Though the serpent was permitted to enter the earthly paradise, and to seduce our first parents from their allegiance to their Maker and Ruler, yet no seducer shall be allowed to enter the abodes of the blessed, to introduce defilement into the inheritance of the saints in light. Though ancient Israel, when introduced by a train of stupendous miracles into the earthly Canaan, soon defiled by their idolatry that pleasant and promised land, yet when the children of God, his true Israel, enter upon their heavenly inheritance, the celestial Canaan, they shall be confirmed

in a state of perfect purity. They shall never defile, by any sin, the holy land. They shall shine for ever in the beauties of perfect holiness, and the stream of their felicity shall flow pure, and full, and uninterrupted through the ages of eternity.

4th. Another ennobling quality of the Christian's future inheritance is, that it is *unfading*, or *undecaying*. We find that everything in this world is fading and transitory in its nature. The most beautiful objects which meet the eye are frail and fading; nay, the fairer any object is, the more fading it is found to be. This is the case with the flowers which adorn our gardens—they are the gayest and most attractive objects we behold, and they are, at same time, the most tender and transient. The various plants, also, which beautify and enrich our fields, soon languish and decay; and even those which are the strongest and hardiest wither, decline, and die away. The trees, likewise, which form our forests and decorate the face of nature are subject to decay—even the tall and sturdy oak, the monarch of the wood, which for ages has adorned the mountain's brow, and withstood the fury of many a storm, at last begins to yield to the hand of time, withers and decays, and falls to the earth from which it sprung. Man himself, the lord of this lower world, is subject to this general law:—he grows up, decays, and fades. “He cometh forth as a flower, and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.” He is either suddenly cut down by disease or accident, or in the course of nature he begins to decline. The bloom of youthful beauty fades on his countenance, the flush of health leaves his cheek, the eye which sparkled with vivacity loses its light and lustre, and the strength and vigour of manhood are succeeded by the feebleness and decrepitude of old



age. All our earthly joys are, moreover, dying joys: they soon cease to delight, and at length become tiresome and disgusting. The toys which pleased us in childhood do not give satisfaction when we become men, and the pursuits and active employments of manhood cannot be followed or relished in advanced life. The charm of novelty, so necessary to give a relief to all worldly pleasures, is soon lost, and the longer they are enjoyed and the more frequently they are repeated, the more tasteless and insipid they become. But while all earthly objects and enjoyments are fading and transitory, the Christian's heavenly inheritance is unfading and eternal. It possesses perpetual beauty and undecaying verdure, and is calculated to impart increasing pleasure and fresh delight. It is subject to no change, liable to no diminution, and susceptible of no decay. There the sun never goes down, nor does the moon withdraw her shining, and therefore no night comes in to close their splendid day. Their seasons do not succeed one another in rapid succession. No clouds darken the glory of summer, no frost destroys the buds and blossoms of spring, no cold blasts the riches of autumn, and no winter interrupts the eternal spring imparting perpetual beauty and growing freshness to the heavenly country. There the flowers never fade, the plants of paradise never decay, the tree of life never withers, and the pure stream springing from beneath the throne of God and the Lamb, and which gladdens the celestial city, is never diminished, but flows on with a full and perpetual current. The riches of this country are durable riches, its honours are unfading honours, and all its pleasures are pure, permanent, and satisfactory; the longer they are enjoyed, the sweeter they become; they satisfy, but never cloy. The scenes and objects of this

world are presented to the view of the inhabitants in perfect, unfading beauty, and they are all so combined, adjusted, and modified, as to afford perpetual pleasure and new delight; there is no decay in the celestial beauty, and no abatement in the heavenly enjoyment. Here the verdure of spring and the glory of summer, the murmuring of the stream and the music of the grove, the waving of the forest and the swelling of the mountain, the richness of the plain, the expanse of the ocean, and the varied canopy of heaven, are all so mixed, blended, and diversified, as to yield perpetual pleasure, increasing delight, and ever growing transport. The longer they look upon the heavenly objects, the more delighted they are with the contemplation; the longer they listen to the heavenly music, the more charmed they are with its delightful harmony; the more they mingle with the society of heaven, the more pleased they are with their kindness and intercourse, and the longer they engage in the various exercises of heaven, the more transporting they become; their faculties being enlarged and strengthened, and their senses being adapted to the distinct perception of the objects presented to their view, they delight, without dazzling them with their overpowering splendour, and keep alive their wonder, adoration, and praise. Although millions of ages run their round, their inheritance shall be as fresh and fragrant as when they first entered upon it, and eternity, as it rolls on, shall only disclose to them new beauties, and impart to them unceasing satisfaction and delight. They shall continue in their own persons to flourish in immortal youth and beauty, and they shall enjoy an inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, unfading, and everlasting.

Having thus contemplated the nature and qualities of the heavenly inheritance, we now proceed,

II. To state the grounds upon which Christians entertain a lively or living hope of enjoying it. And these appear from the text to be chiefly two : first, the abundant mercy of God, even the Father ; and secondly, the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

1st. The first ground which the text sets before us of the Christian's lively hope of enjoying the heavenly inheritance, is *the abundant mercy of God the Father*. Mercy is that amiable attribute of Deity by which he is disposed to pity the miserable and to pardon the guilty, and even to re-admit them into his favour, in consistency with the rights of justice and the dignity of his moral government. As the objects of divine mercy are the miserable and guilty, so it excludes every idea of merit ; for merit and mercy are quite inconsistent, to merit mercy being a contradiction in terms. The mercy of God is nearly of the same import with his grace or unmerited favour ; and it is upon this revealed mercy and grace of God, in the promise of the gospel, that Christians found their hope of future felicity, for, Ps. cxlvii. 11, " The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy." From the works of nature we may learn that God is good, but from this volume alone we cannot be assured of his gracious designs to the guilty, or be convinced that he is ready to forgive them, and to re-admit them into his family and favour. This consolatory truth, however, is clearly revealed to us in Scripture, for there we learn with a certainty and precision proportioned to its vast importance, that the name of Jehovah, as proclaim-



ed by himself, is “the Lord, the Lord merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and of great loving-kindness, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.” Thus we are assured that he is great and abundant in mercy—that his mercy triumphs over all our guilt, and his grace over all our unworthiness—that his mercy sent Christ, the son of his love, into this world to atone for our offences, and to render the exercise of mercy consistent with the claims of justice, that he might be just, while he justifies the ungodly who believe in Jesus, the mercy promised to the fathers. This mercy is abundant; it provides for all our wants, for the pardon of all our sins, and holds out to us, in great and precious promises, every blessing of which we stand in need. Where sin hath abounded, grace much more abounds, for it reigns through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. “The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ;” for “this is the promise he hath promised us, eternal life, and this life is in his Son.” Now, every Christian cordially embraces these promises, and he entertains a well-founded hope of enjoying their accomplishment in a future world. He rejoices in hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began. It is obvious, therefore, that his hope of the heavenly inheritance does not rest upon any meritorious services which he can perform, but is founded simply and solely upon the mercy and grace of God manifested in the free promise and the unspeakable gifts of his love. It must, therefore, ever be borne in mind that it is not in the absolute mercy of God that Christians hope for the heavenly inheritance, but only in his mercy as manifested and glorified through Jesus Christ; “for he that spared not his own Son, but delivered

him up to death for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Christians do not attempt to purchase what mercy promises and offers to bestow. They thankfully accept of the invaluable boon, and never expect to enter upon the heavenly inheritance as the reward of their own services or sufferings, but they look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. Mercy, free, sovereign, and abundant, is the source of our salvation as sinners, for it is according to this mercy he saves us by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he sheds on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. Christians therefore embrace this mercy held forth to them through Christ in the gospel, and they look forward with confidence to the fulfilment of the promises which the God of mercy makes to them, for he is faithful who hath promised. This humble trust in the abundant mercy of God, through the merits of the Saviour, is honourable unto God, and profitable to themselves. Let Israel then hope in the Lord, for with him there is mercy—plenteous, abundant, sovereign, and saving mercy—and let them say under all their discouragements and fears, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

2d. Another ground on which the hope of Christians is founded, is *the merit of the Saviour's death, attested by his resurrection from the dead*. Though, in the words of our text, the resurrection is only mentioned, yet this fact evidently presupposes his previous death; for if he had not been delivered for our offences, he could not have

been raised again for our justification. Though God in his abundant mercy purposed to bestow the heavenly inheritance upon the objects of his love, yet he resolved to confer it in such a manner as to testify his displeasure against their sins, support the honour of his law, and vindicate the equity of his moral government. Guilt exposes the transgressor to condemnation, and until this be removed a holy God cannot admit condemned criminals to maintain friendly intercourse with him. It was an established maxim under the Mosaic dispensation, that without the shedding of blood there was no remission; and if ceremonial guilt could not be forgiven without the death of a typical sacrifice, we may be assured that moral guilt under the gospel dispensation cannot be forgiven but through faith in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The law denounces death against every transgression, and the justice of God demands satisfaction for our offences; and therefore, if the Son of God had not become our surety, and made complete atonement for our sins, we have reason to believe that no way of access would have been opened unto the presence of God, nor could we have entertained any well founded hope of enjoying the heavenly inheritance. The sword of justice would have guarded the entrance to the heavenly paradise, which, in this case, must have been for ever inaccessible to sinners of the human race. But our gracious and glorious Redeemer has removed every obstruction, and opened the way into the holiest of all. He has fully satisfied the claims of divine justice—reconciled us unto God, by giving himself for us a sacrifice and an offering unto God of a sweet smelling savour. The way to heaven is now opened up through his atoning blood, and having received from the Father the promise of the kingdom, he



bestows it upon all his people, saying, "I appoint unto you a kingdom, even as my Father hath appointed unto me a kingdom. I give unto you eternal life, and you shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of my hand." But although Jesus Christ by his atoning death removed the guilt of our sins, and opened a way into the heavenly inheritance, yet the evidence of this truth would have been incomplete if he had not been raised from the dead. His resurrection, therefore, is a satisfying proof not only of his true divinity, but also of the perfection and acceptableness of his atoning sacrifice for all the purposes for which it was presented unto God. We learn from the gospel history that Christ was condemned to death by the Jews for the alleged crime of blasphemy, or for calling himself the Son of God; but his resurrection was a declaration from God himself that their charge was unfounded, and a public refutation of their impious calumny: and hence it is said, Rom. i. 4, that he was "declared to be the Son of God with power, by his resurrection from the dead." Besides, it is to be borne in mind that as Christ suffered under the character of his people's surety, or substitute, if he had not been raised from the tomb, we might have justly suspected that his satisfaction was incomplete, and that he had failed to discharge the debt of those whom he had engaged to redeem. But in the resurrection of Christ, we have the most convincing evidence that his sacrifice was acceptable, and a satisfactory proof of the future resurrection of all his people, and their final enjoyment of the heavenly inheritance. Christ is raised from the dead; our hopes therefore, if we are Christians, are not vain. We are not in our sins, but we rose with him to the certain expectation of a blessed resurrection and a glorious immortality. This truth is

stated with great force and fulness by the Apostle in the fifteenth chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians, where the resurrection of Christ is represented as the pledge and proof of the resurrection of all who are connected with him. Christ rose from the dead, not as a solitary isolated individual, nor did he ascend into heaven in this capacity; but he rose as the head of his people, he ascended into heaven as their illustrious forerunner and representative, to take possession of the heavenly inheritance; and to secure their admission into those mansions he has gone before to prepare for them. If the head thus rose, and lives, and reigns, the members shall be raised, and live, and reign with him. If Christ had remained in the tomb, the hopes of his followers would have been buried with him; but now that he is risen from the dead, they rise with him to a living hope of an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Nay, so intimate is the connection between Christ the living head and all the members of his mystical body, that, in the language of Scripture, they are said to be risen with him, and actually to sit with him in heavenly places. Memorable to this purpose are the words of the Apostle, Eph. ii. 6, "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." It is on these principles the Apostle says, Rom. viii. 34, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Such then are the solid grounds upon which the hope of Christians rests of enjoying the heavenly inheritance—the abundant mercy of God in Christ Jesus expressed in his gracious promises, and in the gift of his Son, and the infinite merit

of the Saviour's death attested by his resurrection from the dead. These are two immovable pillars, sufficient to support the hope of every Christian, especially where this hope is seen to produce its appropriate and corresponding effects in the Christian's temper and deportment.

III. This leads us to show you the evidence of Christians being possessed of this living hope.

1st. All who are possessed of this living hope *have been renovated by the word and Spirit of the living God*, and accordingly they are said in our text to be begotten again to this hope. It is not in consequence of their natural birth they enjoy this hope, for "by nature they were the children of wrath, even as others"—living without God and without hope in the world. But it is in consequence of the supernatural and universal change they experienced, when they passed from death unto life and became new creatures in Christ Jesus, that this living hope sprung up in their minds, and began to cheer their hearts. This renovation of nature is noticed by our Apostle at the 23d verse of this chapter, where he says of Christians that they were "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." While men remain unregenerate, they are destitute of the Spirit, consequently of all the graces of the Spirit, and of hope among the rest; for Christians abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. But when they are born again, they are quickened by the Spirit—their minds are enlightened, their wills are renewed, and from their new nature they begin to experience new desires and dispositions, new hopes and fears. They are taken into the family of God, and inspired with the hope of his



children. Now, this renovation of nature is an evidence of our possessing this living hope, because it is inseparably connected with it, and therefore Christians are said to be begotten again unto this hope.

2d. Another evidence of our possessing this living hope, *is a firm faith in the truths of the gospel, and a constant dependence upon Jesus Christ.* Accordingly, Christians are said, in this passage, to be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. Faith is a belief of the truth on the divine testimony concerning Christ, a cordial acceptance of him in all his offices, and an humble confidence in him and his great atonement for pardon and eternal life. While faith embraces the promises of the gospel as true, hope looks out for the good contained in the promises; hope therefore springs from faith, as faith itself is the result of a renovation of nature. Faith is the effect and evidence of regeneration; for none will believe in Christ, who have not been renewed in the spirit of their minds. This truth is distinctly stated, John i. 12, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:" it is added, "which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Renovation of nature is connected with faith in Christ, and this faith is an evidence that we are possessed of true christian hope. Infidelity is a gloomy hopeless system, and therefore it is no wonder that a celebrated infidel, when dying, declared a little before his death, that he had but little hope. If he had been possessed of the faith of the gospel, he would have felt the hope of the gospel, even the living hope of a future glorious and incorruptible inheritance.

3d. *Ardent gratitude* and *cordial thanksgiving* is another evidence of our possessing the living hope of the gospel. Hence, all Christians who have this hope are introduced in the words before us as saying, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again to this living hope." Christian hope is a pleasing, animating principle, and as its objects are the most sublime and interesting which can be set before the human mind, it is no wonder it should excite them to lively gratitude and animated praise. The more steadfast our hope is of enjoying the heavenly inheritance, and the nearer we approach the completion of our desires and expectations, the more constant and cordial we shall be in this delightful exercise. We shall begin to breathe the Spirit, and engage in the work of the heavenly inhabitants, saying, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever."

4th. *Spirituality of mind* is an evidence that we are possessed of this living hope. If we have interest in the heavenly inheritance our treasure is in heaven, and our hearts will be also there. Our affections will be set on things that are above, and we shall be spiritually-minded, which is life and peace. We shall delight in spiritual exercises, in meditation, prayer, and praise; and we shall be frequent in them, because we find them pleasing and delightful. We shall discover a noble superiority to this present world, being neither too much elevated by its gains or honours, nor too much depressed by its losses and disappointments. Like Moses, we shall prefer affliction with the people of God to all the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season. We shall suffer as seeing God who is invisible, because we have a respect to

the recompense of reward ; or, like the primitive persecuted Christians, we shall take joyfully the spoiling of our goods and the loss of our earthly all—knowing that we have in heaven a better, even an enduring substance.

5th. An ardent *desire after personal and universal holiness* is an evidence of our possessing the living hope of true Christians. 1 John iii. 3 —“ Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” The inheritance which the Christian hopes to enjoy is undefiled, and therefore it is obvious that he must aspire after increasing purity, and growing conformity to the image of God, for without this he can neither have any evidence of interest in the heavenly inheritance, nor any meetness for enjoying it ; as without holiness no man shall see or can see the Lord. There is nothing of which a Christian is more desirous than improvement in personal purity ; he is more anxious to be holy than to be wealthy and honourable in this world, and therefore he is diligent in the use of all appointed means to have sin subdued and mortified, to have holy dispositions strengthened and confirmed, and even to perfect holiness in the fear of God. The more he advances in holiness the happier he becomes, and the more meet for enjoying the inheritance of the saints in light.

Finally. *Diligence in the discharge of every duty, and zealous, persevering efforts to promote the glory of God, the honour of the Redeemer, and the best interests of mankind,* form a decisive evidence of our being inspired with the living hope of the gospel. Hope is a lively, animating, and active principle, and when it exists in the heart it must excite to the most vigorous exertions to obtain its object. The heavenly inheritance, though



a reward of grace, is not to be expected by the careless, the indolent, and inactive, who do not occupy with those talents they have received. The slothful servant who binds up his master's talent in a napkin is a wicked and unprofitable servant, and has nothing to expect from his lord but reprehension and condemnation. The expectant of the heavenly inheritance, therefore, must be unwearied and indefatigable in his Master's service. His hope of the heavenly inheritance must prompt him to the cheerful and vigorous performance of every duty incumbent upon him in the station he occupies, and sphere in which Providence has appointed him to move. He will awake from sloth and carnal security, and by a patient continuance in well-doing he will seek for glory, honour, and immortality. He will be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; knowing that his labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. He will add to his faith fortitude, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and universal benevolence; and these things being in him and abounding, he shall be neither idle nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, and so an entrance shall be ministered unto him abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

From what has been said, inquire whether or not you have interest in the heavenly inheritance, and a living hope of finally entering upon its possession. This examination is the more necessary, as it is to be feared that many deceive themselves to their eternal ruin. They hope to arrive at heaven, and yet their hope is not the living hope of the Christian, but the hope of the hypocrite, which shall perish. What has been stated in this

discourse may assist you in conducting this necessary self-scrutiny. Does your hope of heaven rest simply on the abundant mercy of God, through the atoning death of our divine Redeemer, attested by his resurrection from the dead. Is it founded on the promise of eternal life embraced by a lively faith, and are you possessed of the evidences of being animated by this living hope which we have set before you? Have you been begotten again to this hope, and is it the effect of a renovation of nature by the influence of the Holy Spirit through the word? Does it spring from a living faith in Christ, and an humble dependence upon him as your Saviour? Does it excite you to daily praise unto God, and cordial thanksgiving unto him? Does it lead you to spirituality of mind, and heavenly desires and dispositions? Does it induce you to pursue after personal holiness? And, finally, does it make you diligent in the performance of every duty, and zealous in promoting the glory of God, and the good of mankind? If your hope rests on these foundations, and produces these happy effects, then you have reason to conclude on scriptural grounds, that it is the living hope of true Christians, and that you shall receive the end of your faith and hope, even the salvation of your souls.

We shall conclude this discourse with an address to three classes, which must include the whole of our present audience.

1st. We shall address those who are animated with the living hope of the gospel, and who have good hope through grace. Be humble, for it is owing to the grace of God, and not to any worthiness of your own, that you have been brought into your present happy condition. It is God who

gives you everlasting consolation and good hope through grace. Beware, therefore, of pride and self-confidence, and guard against everything that might darken your evidences, or deaden your hope. Be not high-minded, but fear; entertain lowly sentiments of yourselves and your services, and do not think of yourselves more highly than you ought to think; for if your heart be lifted up, you are near a fall. Let a lively sense of the divine grace and goodness ever dwell upon your minds, and let your gratitude to God be expressed in songs of praise and thanksgiving. Make sweet melody in your hearts unto the Lord, and call upon your souls and all that is within you to bless and magnify his holy name. Be comforted under all the sorrows and sufferings of a present life—by the conviction that they shall all work together for your good. You may be poor and afflicted, and have no earthly possession you can call your own, but if you have an inheritance in the heavens, which is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away, you have durable riches, and are happier than if you could call the whole world your own. Labour by every means in your power to bring others, and especially kindred according to the flesh, to the Saviour, that they also may be fellow heirs with you of the future heavenly inheritance. By your instructions and advice, your example, influence, and prayers, endeavour to bring them to the knowledge and belief of the truth, that they also may rejoice in hope of the glory that is yet to be revealed.

2d. We shall address a few words to those who are indifferent about their eternal interests, and have no well-founded hope of future happiness. The only things which engage your attention, or interest your hearts, are the wealth, the pleasures,



and pursuits of this present world. You may indeed feel some desire after future felicity, but it is not a desire for the holy happiness of heaven ; for happiness arising from the favour and likeness, the love and praise of God—for such happiness you have no relish, and consequently can feel no desire. You have set your hearts upon this world, and have chosen it as your portion, and are you satisfied with it, and feel you no desire after anything more noble and permanent than it can bestow? Are you willing always to be children, and to delight in the toys of childhood, having no desire to attain the perfection and happiness of your nature? What would you think of a child who should be willing always to be a child, and had no desire to be a man, to taste manly pleasures, and to engage in manly exercises and pursuits? and what shall we say of those mean and ignoble spirits who cleave to the dust, and never aspire after glory, honour, and immortality. There is a meanness in their desires, and there is misery connected with this meanness, for no rational creature can be happy but in the favour and likeness of God, or in enjoyment of that inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away. O be no longer indifferent about the one thing needful, do not prefer earth to heaven, or time to eternity, but, turning away your eyes from viewing vanity, divert them to the glorious realities of a future world. Choose God in Christ as your inheritance and the portion of your cup, and then, when the earthly house of your tabernacle shall be dissolved, you shall have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Lastly. We shall conclude with an address to those who, after all that has been said, are still doubtful whether or not they have an interest in

the inheritance of the saints in light, and are possessed of the living hope of the gospel. They are at a loss what judgment they ought to form of their state and character in the sight of God. They have their hopes, but they have also their fears, and they are destitute of that full assurance of hope which others have enjoyed. As this, probably, is a pretty numerous class in every congregation, an address to them must be somewhat pointed and particular. To remove all ambiguity, let it be recollected that in Scripture we read of the full assurance of faith and the full assurance of hope, and there seems to be a distinction between those two, by not attending to which, confusion has been introduced into the subject, the comfort of Christians diminished, and the perplexity of the doubtful increased. The assurance of faith is a full persuasion of the truths of the gospel, particularly of the accepted sacrifice of Christ, simply upon the testimony of God in his word, and this assurance is essential to the nature of faith, for, unless we are fully convinced of the truths which God has testified concerning Christ, we do not believe, we are in fact unbelievers, and make God a liar. Hence Christians draw near unto God in the full assurance of faith in the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Heb. x. 22. But the full assurance of hope, or of personal interest in the blessings of the gospel and the inheritance of the saints in light, is founded on the evidence we possess of having believed in the Saviour, or on the effect which this faith produces on our temper and deportment. In proportion, therefore, as we improve in humility and holiness, our victory over sin, self, and a present world, the evidence of the reality of our faith brightens, and our hope of interest in Christ is confirmed. Every person, therefore, who believes the

truths of the gospel, with an assured faith in the testimony of God, has not the full assurance of hope, because this can only be attained by holy diligence, and humble, self-denied obedience. If these fruits are not apparent in our conduct, we may doubt of the reality of our faith, and others will doubt of the soundness of our profession and the safety of our state. Thus we find Paul stood in doubt of some professors in the church of Galatia; and surely, in such circumstances, those individuals might have doubted of themselves. If any of us, therefore, have become remiss and negligent, if we have left our first love and zeal, if we are in a declining backsliding condition, we ought not to dismiss our doubts as altogether groundless; but, on the contrary, we ought to be jealous of ourselves, we ought to repent and to do our first works, and by holy self-denied obedience, by walking more closely with God, by watching against sin and attending to every duty, we should endeavour to recover the evidences of the reality of our faith, in order that we may maintain an assured hope of our interest in the heavenly inheritance. The substance of what we have said in this exhortation is contained in the two following passages, with which we shall conclude this discourse:—2 Pet. i. 10—“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure.” Heb. vi. 11—“And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end.” And now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. Amen.



## SERMON XII.

### THE KING IN HIS BEAUTY AND THE LAND THAT IS AFAR OFF.

Is. xxxiii. 17.

“Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty; they shall behold the land that is very far off.”

WHEN an individual is renovated by the Spirit of God, and his understanding opened to a perception of the truth as it is in Jesus, the most glorious and attractive objects are presented to his view. He is brought as it were into a new world, he perceives beauties and experiences pleasures which he neither saw nor felt before. He not only discerns the truth, connexion, and excellence of the doctrines of revelation, but he is struck with the discovery he obtains of the King of Zion—of the dignity of his person, the extent of his kingdom, the happiness of his subjects, and the glorious and incorruptible inheritance he has secured for them in a future world. This is the important blessing promised to every believer in the words of our text, where it said, that “thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty, and the land that is very far off.” It is our intention in this discourse,

I. To consider the character of the person who is here introduced and addressed.

II. Some of the discoveries with which he shall be favoured.

III. Some of the effects which these discoveries never fail to produce.

I. Let us consider the character of the person who is here introduced. And we observe that he is one who has been enlightened in the knowledge of the great and leading doctrines of the gospel. We learn from Scripture, and may know from experience, that as sinners we are involved in gross moral darkness. We are ignorant of God, of ourselves, and of the way of salvation by the Redeemer; nor are we able by any effort of our own to remove this spiritual ignorance. All Zion's children, however, are taught of God, for he who at first commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shines into their minds to give them to see the light of the knowledge of his glory as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ, and thus they are translated from the kingdom of darkness, introduced into the kingdom of his dear Son, and made wise unto salvation. They are taught in a peculiar manner to know the truth in reference to the person and worth of the Redeemer, and the method of salvation through him as exhibited in the gospel. This knowledge, it is true, is not acquired all at once, but is gradual and progressive, and always awakens a serious concern about our eternal interests. It is a knowledge connected with saving faith, for the person here addressed, not only knows the truth, but cordially believes it. He credits the testimony of God concerning his Son our Saviour, and renouncing every other ground of hope, relies upon him and his perfect atonement for pardon, acceptance, and eternal life. He rests on him as the foundation God hath laid in Zion, and, with the ancient church, says concerning him, "Truly in the Lord alone have I righteousness and strength, and in him will I ever glory." But as faith works by love, and love is the keeping of the commandments, he attends constantly to the duties of right-

cousness and integrity, and therefore he is represented in the fifteenth verse of this chapter as one who walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly. His conduct is regulated by the law of the Lord, the perfect rule of rectitude; he renders to every one his due, and pays a sacred regard to truth and justice in his intercourse with his brethren of mankind. He gives unto God the glory that is due unto his name, for he loves, fears, and serves him; he does unto others in every respect as he wishes that they in similar circumstances should do unto him; and in reference to himself, he is sober and temperate, and never wilfully nor habitually transgresses the laws of christian moderation. His righteousness is not occasional and temporary, but uniform and persevering, for he walketh in the way of righteousness, and advanceth in this path to the end of his course. But the man is not merely righteous and upright; he is also humane and benevolent; he abhors cruelty and crimes, and cannot look with approbation upon that which is evil. Accordingly it is said of him in the preceding context, that he stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil. While religion sanctifies, it softens the heart, and makes it sensitive to the woes and wrongs of others. To the feelings of humanity, it superadds those of christian benevolence, and is always accompanied with a hatred of vice and a love of virtue. The appearance of severity and oppression gives great pain to the Christian, and he will not listen to the language of impurity or calumny. While he sympathizes with the sufferings and privations of his brethren, he endeavours to the utmost of his power to mitigate or remove them. In the beautiful language of Scripture, "he draws out his soul to the hungry, and satisfies the afflicted soul; when he



sees the naked he clothes them, and hides not himself from his own flesh. He is eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, and the cause of the poor and needy he searches out." He endeavours, in a word, to the utmost of his ability, to diminish the mass of human misery, and to augment the sum of human happiness. Such is a brief outline of the character of the person who is here introduced, and to whom the promise of the text belongs.

II. Let us now proceed to consider the discoveries with which persons of this character are favoured; "they shall see the King in his beauty, and the land that is very far off." By the king in this passage, some understand King Hezekiah, who after the destruction of the Assyrian army, was magnified in the sight of the surrounding nations, who brought him presents and showed him the greatest respect. But we apprehend that a greater than Hezekiah is here. We are persuaded that by the king in this verse we are to understand our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of Zion and the Lord of glory, who "hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords." Of this King, it is obvious the prophet speaks in the beginning of the preceding chapter, when he says, "Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment, and a man (or rather the man) shall be a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." The same illustrious personage is introduced at the fifth and sixth verses of this chapter, where it is said, "He shall be exalted and dwell on high, and fill Zion with judgment, and righteousness, and wisdom, and knowledge shall be the stability of his times. The Lord is our judge, the

Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king, he will save us." From this, it is evident that the King, whose beauty and excellence all true believers behold, is our Lord Jesus Christ, who is set on the holy hill of Zion, and who rules in Jacob, and unto the ends of the earth. Now in addition to the many advantages which persons whose character we have considered enjoy—such as their dwelling on high, their defence being the munition of rocks, bread being given them, and their water being made sure—it is promised to them, that their "eyes shall see the King in his beauty, and the land that is very far off."

1st. They shall see the King in his *personal beauty and transcendent excellence*. The person of Jesus Christ is the most glorious and amiable object in the universe. He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. He is Emmanuel, God with us, God manifest in the flesh, combining all the perfections of divinity with all the virtues of pure and perfect humanity. All the rays of glory scattered through the visible creation are collected and concentrated in him, the Lord of glory; and all the beauty, whether natural or moral, which in this world we admire, is but a faint emanation from him, the Sun of righteousness and the light of the world. He is the light and life of both dispensations and both worlds, uniting heaven to earth, and man to his Maker. They who are blind to his excellence are still involved in gross moral darkness, for the light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehends it not. Though during his sojourn here in this world his glory was veiled with the robe of humanity, yet some rays of it burst at times from under this covering, to the admiration and delight of those who beheld them, and now his glory shines in

the heavenly world with unveiled splendour, for the Lamb is the light thereof. The personal beauty of Christ is perceived by every believer, with the eye of faith, in this world; and in the world to come he shall obtain a full and satisfying vision of this glory, for the prayer of the Redeemer shall then be realized—"Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." But who can describe the beauty and excellence of our Saviour's person? Who can add brightness to the light, or whiteness to the driven snow? Even they who have beheld the beauty of the King of Zion in the word and ordinances upon earth are unable to describe its transcendent excellence, and can only adopt the admiring language of the prophet, and exclaim, "How great his goodness, and how great his beauty! One thing have we desired of the Lord, and that will we seek after; that all the days of our lives we may dwell in the house of the Lord, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." Solomon, when seated on his splendid throne, and arrayed in his royal robes, must have been a dignified and imposing personage; but Solomon in all his glory is no more to be compared with the King of Zion, than the twinkling of the midnight star is to be compared with the splendour of the meridian sun.

2d. Believers shall also behold the King of Zion in the *excellence of his official character*. Our Saviour, we learn from Scripture, is anointed to execute three important offices, and in his official character is wisely and wonderfully adapted to our wants and weakness, and qualified to remove our ignorance, our guilt, and our misery. As our heavenly instructor he not only sets before us the truths of the gospel, but by the influence of the



Spirit he enlightens the minds of his people to see them in their connection and excellence. As the light of the world he shines into their minds, dispelling the clouds of darkness and ignorance, and introducing a bright and cheerful day of light and spiritual discernment. He opens blind eyes, and brings forth the prisoner out of the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house. Thus they who were once darkness are made light in the Lord—they are translated from the kingdom of darkness, and introduced to the kingdom of God's dear Son. But his people are also guilty, and their sins must be expiated by an adequate atonement, in order to their being forgiven. With this view, as their great high priest, he gave himself for them a sacrifice and an offering unto God for a sweet smelling savour. He bore their sins in his own body on the tree, and by one offering has for ever perfected them who are sanctified. In virtue of this sacrifice he entered into the heavenly world, appears in the presence of God, and ever lives to make intercession for his people, and is therefore able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. Believers then behold him as a priest upon his throne, reigning as a sovereign over those he redeemed with his blood. The regal office of Christ is the one which is expressly mentioned in our text, and deserves our particular attention. It must be evident to those who peruse the Scriptures, that the sacred writers frequently style Christ a king; nay, we find him sometimes claiming this character to himself. Thus, when Pilate asked him, while standing before him in judgment, "Art thou a king?" his reply was in effect the following:—"Thou sayest that I am. I am possessed of that office, and for this end was I born,

and for this cause came I into the world, that I might bear witness to the truth; and however mean and contemptible I may now appear in your presence, hereafter ye shall see me coming in my glory, and sitting upon my throne." As his subjects in this world, in their natural estate, were his enemies, he exerts his regal power in subduing them unto himself; not, however, by compelling them to yield a reluctant submission to his authority, but by making them willing, in a day of his power, to claim him as their rightful sovereign, and cordially to obey his most holy law. He governs his subjects by his word and Spirit, writes his law upon their hearts, protects them from the dangers to which they are exposed, and, subduing the power of their enemies, destroys them, and thus saves them with an everlasting salvation. How amiable is Christ in his regal character, and how happy are all they who are subject to his authority! He is infinitely superior to the greatest sovereign who ever reigned in this world. They are only frail and feeble mortals, but he is the mighty God, the Lord from heaven, and the King eternal. Other kings are limited in their authority, but his dominion is universal; for all power in heaven and in earth is committed unto him. Other sovereigns may sit on magnificent thrones, be dressed in royal apparel, and crowned with costly diadems, but Christ sitteth upon a throne of glory, is clothed with the garments of salvation, and has upon his head many crowns. The treasures of other sovereigns may be spent in schemes of mad ambition and personal aggrandizement, but the riches of the King of Zion are unsearchable and inexhaustible, and are employed in promoting and perfecting the happiness of his subjects. The victories of other sovereigns are frequently gained with the loss of

much blood and treasure, and often accompanied with the degradation or destruction of the vanquished, but the victories of the King of Zion are bloodless and peaceful victories : they are the victories of truth over error—of knowledge over ignorance, and are always connected with the liberty and happiness of the conquered. The attendants of earthly sovereigns are a few titled mortals, who are often unable to protect them from the dangers which surround them, but the King of Zion is attended with myriads of superior beings, angels who excel in strength, and are ever ready to execute his commands. Other sovereigns are haughty, and will not listen to the petitions of their people ; but Christ is a kind and condescending sovereign, who hears and answers the supplications of those who apply unto him for aid or relief. Other sovereigns sometimes become cruel and tyrannical, unjust and oppressive, and, in the administration of their government, deprive their subjects of their rights and privileges ; but Christ Jesus reigns in righteousness, and for the good of his subjects, for the sceptre of his kingdom is a right sceptre. Other sovereigns being mortal, leave their thrones, and after a few years are laid in the dust with the meanest of their subjects, but Christ is an immortal King who lives and reigns for ever, and because he lives and reigns, his people shall live and reign with him. How amiable then is Christ in his royal character, and what reason have all the children of Zion to be joyful in their King ! They see abundant reason for the injunction of the prophet, Zech. ix. 9, “ Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion ; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem : behold, thy King cometh unto thee : he is just, and having salvation ;” for he has eternal life to bestow upon



all his subjects in a future world—in that better country, which is an heavenly.

3d. This leads us to observe, that persons of the character we have described shall *also see the land that is a very far off*. With respect to the locality of this land, we have reason from Scripture to believe that it is at an immense distance from this earth, but we ought to be more attentive to its nature and excellence than to its local situation. In Scripture it is said to be the paradise of God, an incorruptible inheritance, a better, an heavenly country, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Believers behold this land, not with the bodily eye as Moses saw the land of Canaan from the top of Mount Nebo, nor as Paul saw it when he was caught up into paradise. They have no immediate discovery of heavenly glory while they remain in this world; they see it only by faith receiving the divine testimony concerning it; and this is undoubtedly a sufficient ground for our belief in the reality of its existence, for, if we receive the testimony of man, the testimony of God is greater or more worthy of credit. We believe in the existence of many lands which we have not seen, simply upon the testimony of others who have visited them. It is upon this ground we believe in the existence of the land of Palestine, and of many islands scattered over the surface of the vast Pacific Ocean; and if we believe in the existence of these lands upon the testimony of man, shall we not believe in the existence of this land that is a very far off, upon the testimony of God who cannot lie? But believers are not only convinced of the reality of this land—they also see it in its glory and excellence. The beauty and excellence of this land are represented in Scripture by every figure which can give us an

idea of its riches and happiness ; and yet, after all, we are able to form but very inadequate conceptions of its glory. We know, however, that it is free from all the evils which adhere to the best countries upon the face of the earth—sin, suffering, and death, and that its good things are superior to the best things which are to be found in the most favoured countries upon this globe. In this happy land there is no sin, for its inhabitants are perfectly holy, and nothing that defileth can enter into it. In this land there is no sorrow, for all tears are wiped away from the eyes of the happy inhabitants ; and in this land there is no death, for its inhabitants are immortal, and can die no more. Its riches are durable riches, its honours are unfading, and its pleasures are pure and permanent. Here we may be oppressed with poverty, but there they have constant abundance : here we may be exposed to dishonour, but there they wear for ever a crown of glory : and here our pleasures are transitory and unsatisfactory, but there are fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore. The productions of this land that is a very far off, are more precious, and its society more select and improving, than any to be found in this world. There grows the tree of life, bearing twelve manner of fruits ; there flows the river of life, proceeding from the throne of God and the Lamb, and there dwell all the excellent ones of the earth who have gone before us—the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, and holy men, of whom this world was not worthy. But believers not only see the transcendent excellence of this far distant land ; they behold their right to the enjoyment of it secured by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and by his entering upon the possession of it as their illustrious forerunner. They have also, through grace, obtained a meetness for the hea-

venly inheritance, and, by the inhabitation of the Spirit, they have a present earnest of it, while in due time they shall enter upon it. Though this land, indeed, is at present a very far off, yet this shall not prevent them from entering upon its possession immediately after their departure out of this world; for if a ray of light travels at the rate of two hundred thousand miles in a second, why may not the soul of a Christian, which is spiritual, pass in a few moments into this far distant land? Did not an angel come from heaven to Daniel during the short time of his supplication? and did not our Saviour say to the penitent thief upon the cross, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise?" When Christians are absent from the body, they are present with the Lord; and whenever they pass the Jordan of death they enter the heavenly Canaan. Accordingly, an eminent saint declared, a little before his death, to those who stood around him, "Hitherto I have viewed heaven as a fixed star, bright, indeed, but distant; but now it seems to come near to me, and to be full in my view: its glory beams upon me, its breezes fan me, its odours are wafted to me, and its sounds fall on my ear as the sweetest music. Nothing separates me from this land but the river, or rather rill, of death, which appears so small that I think I could cross it at a single step. But what shall I say? my words are swallowed up—I desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better."

III. Let us now proceed to advert to some of the effects which the discoveries we have considered never fail to produce.

1st. These discoveries must produce *the most ardent love and the highest esteem*. Love, we know, always arises from the perception of real or imaginary excellence. When we behold natural



beauty we admire it, and when we discover moral excellence we esteem it : those, therefore, who see the King in his beauty and excellence must love and esteem him. When their minds are enlightened to perceive his divine and mediatorial glory ; when they see him in the dignity of his person and the suitableness of his official character, love must fill their hearts, and he must become the object of their highest esteem, their constant desire, and their supreme delight. They will say of him, Whom have we in the heavens but thee, and there is none upon all this earth we desire besides thee, or in comparison with thee. If, therefore, you have seen the King in his beauty, you will love him with supreme affection, and every new view you obtain of his loveliness and love will increase this holy affection, and make it burn with growing ardour.

2d. These discoveries will produce *increasing conformity to Jesus Christ*. Beholding his glory as in a glass, we shall be changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. The power which the constant contemplation of a beloved object has to transform us into its own likeness is known to all who are acquainted with human nature. We are insensibly assimilated to those we dearly love and daily admire ; we imbibe their spirit, form upon their manners, and imitate their deportment. This is so much the case, that accurate observers of men and manners, from the behaviour of any individual, can pronounce with considerable certainty with whom he has in general associated. Christians, therefore, who behold the beauty of the King of Zion, and maintain constant fellowship with him, will grow up unto him in all things, and become the living visible image of him they love. Every new discovery of his beauty and excellence will leave some addi-

tional traces of his likeness, and thus they will be gradually assimilated unto him, until at last they see him as he is, and be for ever with the Lord.

3d. The discoveries we have considered will also increase *our spirituality of mind, and our delight in the holy duties and institutions of religion.* A sight of the beauty of Christ, and of the heavenly country, will elevate our minds above the vain transitory objects of this world, and raise our affections to the things which are above. Unregenerate men never saw anything better than this world can bestow, and therefore their hearts are set upon it, and they seek for happiness in its pleasures and enjoyments; but, when their minds are opened to perceive the reality and superior excellence of the heavenly world, the glory of this world is obscured, and they cease to love it with immoderate affection. We may admire the beauty of the moon and stars, but it is only during the night, for when the sun rises their glory disappears, and we rejoice in the lustre of that glorious luminary. In like manner we may love and admire this world, but it is only during the night of our spiritual darkness, for when the light of the Sun of righteousness shines upon us the world ceases to be the object of our love and ardent admiration, while Christ becomes our all in all. We shall then delight in religious duties, in reading, meditation, and attendance upon instituted ordinances; we shall be diligent in searching the Scriptures, because they testify of Christ, and exhibit to us the happiness of the heavenly world; we shall be regular and devout in the services of the sanctuary, and regard them not merely as our duty, but as our honour and our privilege; we shall be glad when it is said unto us, Go ye up unto the house of the Lord, and in going to it we shall say

with the Psalmist, Ps. lxiii. 1, 2, "O God, thou art our God; early will we seek thee: our souls thirst for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as we have seen thee in the sanctuary."

4th. These discoveries will produce an *ardent longing to behold Christ in his glory*, and to enter upon the enjoyment of the celestial Canaan. Perceiving the excellence of Jesus Christ, and discovering by the eye of faith the land that lies beyond the Jordan of death, we will feel a desire to depart and to enter upon the better country, that is, an heavenly. As Moses, perhaps, never felt a stronger desire to go over to the earthly Canaan than when he viewed it from the top of Nebo, so the Christian never feels a stronger desire to enter the heavenly world than when by faith he sees the King in his beauty, and the land that is a very far off. The discovery must excite desire, and desire longs for enjoyment. This world at best is a dry and thirsty land, in which there is no water: it is a land polluted by sin, shaded by sorrow, and darkened by death; but the land of promise is a land of perfect purity, fulness of joy, and deathless life. Here we have sin remaining in us to distress us, but there perfect holiness shall adorn our nature; here we are assailed with temptation, but there no tempter shall enter to seduce us from the path of duty; here we live in a land of distance from Christ, and of darkness, but there we shall be near unto and ever with the Lord. It is no wonder, therefore, that believers in Christ should long to quit these regions of sin, of shadows, and of sorrow, and to enter upon the land of purity, of light and joy, where, free from every evil, and in the possession of a satisfying good, they shall see the unveiled beauty of the Redeemer, and be for



ever with the Lord. "O, when shall the day break, and the shadows flee away! haste, my beloved, and be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether." "Behold," says the Saviour, "I come quickly,"—"Amen," replies the longing Christian; "even so come, Lord Jesus."

1st. From what has been said in illustrating this subject, you may see what are the great outlines of the true Christian's character. All real Christians believe the truths and practise the duties of our holy religion. They walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, studying to be blameless. They combine piety with justice, and righteousness with humanity and christian kindness. They have seen the glory and excellence of Jesus Christ, and of the land that is a very far off, and these discoveries have produced their appropriate effects upon their temper and conduct. They love Christ with supreme affection, they are formed into a resemblance of his image, their hearts are detached from this world and set on things above. They attend upon ordinances, to see the glory of Christ and maintain intercourse with him, and they long incessantly to see Christ as he is—to behold his glory unveiled, and to be for ever with the Lord. If, upon serious examination, you find that this is your genuine character, and these are your pious feelings and desires, you have reason to conclude that you are true Christians, and that, having seen the King in his beauty, and the land that is afar off, by faith upon this earth, you shall see Christ in all his glory, and dwell for ever with him in the heavenly world.

2d. From what has been said, you may learn the superior spiritual discernment and happiness of the righteous, and the mental blindness and increasing misery of the wicked and ungodly.

Though believers may not be possessed of superior talents or scientific acquirements, yet they have been taught of God to know the truth, to discover the glory and excellence of the Saviour, and to rely upon him for life and salvation. Their illumination and happiness are progressive, and in this respect they resemble a person ascending a mountain with a beautiful variegated landscape before him. As they advance, new objects burst upon their view and delight their sight, until, having reached the summit, they wing their way to the celestial world, when the objects which delighted them in distant prospect are seen invested with heavenly radiance, and fill them with astonishment and rapture. How blind then must they be who are destitute of spiritual perception, and how miserable while involved in moral darkness! As holiness and happiness spring from spiritual discernment, so impurity and misery are associated with mental blindness. To behold the beauty of the Saviour, and the reality and excellence of the heavenly world, and discern our interest in both, is celestial happiness begun; and to see it in perfection shall be happiness consummated. But to be blind to the excellence of Christ and the glory of the heavenly inheritance, is hell begun; and if we remain in this state our mental darkness shall deepen until it terminate in the blackness of darkness for ever.

Lastly, from this subject we may see with what desires and dispositions Christians should attend upon the ordinances of our religion. They are the means of exhibiting the glory of Christ, and directing our views to the heavenly world. "In all places where I record my name will I come, and I will bless you." "Where two or three are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Depending upon these pro-

mises and gracious assurances, which have been realized in the experience of many, Christians should attend on public ordinances with earnest desires and enlarged expectations—with a regard to the authority of the King of Zion in appointing them, and a desire to see his glory and to feel his power as they have been seen and felt in the sanctuary; and, sensible of their need of the reviving influences of the Spirit to bring holy dispositions into lively exercise, they ought to pray in the words of the Psalmist, Ps. xliii. 3, 4, “O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me, let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God, my God.” Amen.



## SERMON XIII.

### THE GOOD WORK BEGUN AND CARRIED ON UNTIL THE DAY OF THE LORD.

PHIL. i. 6.

‘ Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.’

CONFIDENCE in subjects of a doubtful nature has generally and justly been considered as an evident mark of ignorance and folly. Were we duly sensible of our limited capacities—of the weakness of our understandings, and our liableness to be deceived by false appearances, we would be extremely diffident in judging of facts or opinions, when the evidence in the smallest degree is imperfect and defective. Some truths, indeed, are so plain and obvious, that to dispute or deny them, would argue the greatest degree of obstinacy and incredulity, and show that we had imbibed the principles of scepticism and infidelity. There are other truths, however, which, though not discovered by the light of nature, yet being clearly revealed in Scripture, must be admitted as facts by all those who do not deny divine revelation. Although some of these rest only upon the authority of Scripture, yet they are accordant with right reason, and admit of such an appeal unto her impartial decision, as tends directly to strengthen and confirm them. Of this nature, we apprehend, is the important sentiment contained in the words of our reading, and which is to form the subject of our present meditations. In prosecuting this subject, the method we propose to observe is,

I. To show you what we are to understand by the good work, and why it is thus denominated.

II. To illustrate the character of those in whom this work is begun.

III. To lay before you the grounds upon which they may be confident that this work shall be brought to a happy and glorious consummation.

And then we shall conclude with some practical improvement of what may be delivered.

I. We are to show you what we are to understand by the good work, and why it is thus denominated. And here in general we observe, that by this good work we are evidently to understand that saving operation of sovereign grace in the soul, which renders the person who is the happy subject of it a new creature in Christ Jesus. It is a work wholly of an internal nature, produced in the heart by the power of divine grace, and consists in nothing that is outward and visible. This is evident from the words of the text: "he who hath begun a good work in you." The soul of man in its natural state may be justly compared to a building laid in ruins. In its original formation it was a fair and beautiful temple, sacred to the residence and consecrated to the service of God; but now by sin, as by the hand of an enemy, it is defaced and destroyed. All its powers and faculties are weakened and disordered, covered with darkness, and stained with guilt; so that, like the Jewish temple when destroyed, we may say concerning it, "the stones are poured out, the altar thrown down, the holy fire extinguished, and the glory of God departed." This good work in the soul then consists in rebuilding this temple, and in fitting it for the habitation and service of God. The foundation is laid in renewing us in the spirit

of our minds, in deep humiliation upon account of sin and lively faith in Jesus Christ, and the superstructure is raised amid much opposition in increasing knowledge, holiness, and spiritual joy. The soul once dead in trespasses and sins is quickened, the person once ignorant of God is made wise unto salvation, and he who once was serving divers lusts and pleasures, aspires after nobler enjoyments, being formed to the love and likeness of God. In short, being born again, he becomes a new creature in Jesus, all old things passing away, and all things becoming new. Let none imagine, therefore, that this work consists in temporary impressions, in ardent feelings, or partial reformation; for, however lively your feelings at times may be, or however far you may go in the externals of religion, if no saving change be produced in your hearts, if you are not renewed in the spirit of your minds, you are strangers to this good work, and are still in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. This work, which we have shortly considered, may certainly with high propriety be denominated good, and that upon the two following accounts:—

1st. It may be styled a good work, because *God, who is infinitely good, is the great and sole author of it.* Eph. ii. 10—“We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” Although God may employ means and subordinate instruments in accomplishing this work, yet as these are appointed by him, and derive all their virtue and efficacy from him, he is justly considered as the great author of the whole. Now, if this be a work of God, must it not be good? Can any thing of an opposite nature come from his holy hand? When he created this world and all things in it, he saw and said that they were



good ; and when he works this work in the soul of man, it must bear his image and partake of his nature, and therefore with great propriety is denominated good.

2d. This work may be styled good, because it *renders those in whom it is produced truly good, and qualifies them for the performance of those works which deserve to be called good.* Whatever ideas some may have of the dignity and excellence of human nature in its fallen state, one who was well acquainted with it under the influence of the Spirit declares, “in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.” Although the hearts of worldly and vicious men in whom this work is not begun, may, in the fashionable and flattering style of modern times, be called good, yet in the just and accurate language of Scripture they are said to be little worth. Some men, indeed, from their natural constitution, may discover more sweetness of temper and humanity than others ; but no man by nature, and before this good work commences in his soul, is possessed of the graces of the Spirit, of that love and benevolence, that humility and meekness, which the gospel requires. It is this work alone that renders a man good, benevolent, and divine, that gives him new principles and dispositions, that makes him a new creature, and qualifies him for the performance of those works which are pleasing unto God, as well as profitable unto men. However much, therefore, some men may contend for the goodness of their own actions, and press others who are dead in trespasses and sins to the performance of good works ; the declaration of Scripture upon this point is as plain as it is decisive, that we must be created anew in Christ Jesus unto these good works. Until we experience this change, we are as incapable of performing works that are good in

the estimation of God, as a dead body is of performing the ordinary duties of life. Action necessarily supposes life, and good actions a good heart from whence they proceed, for actions are to the heart what fruit is to the tree, or streams to the fountain—they show it to be good or bad, but they make it neither. When God, therefore, performs this good work in the soul—when he accomplishes that gracious promise, “a new heart also will I give unto you, and a right spirit will I put within you”—then the person becomes good, amiable, and excellent, partaker of a divine nature, and possessed of those principles and dispositions which are necessary to the performance of good works.

II. We now proceed to illustrate the character of those in whom this work is begun.

1st. We observe that persons of this character will be *sensible of some difference between their present and their former condition*. We do not affirm that every individual of this description must be able to ascertain the period of his conversion, or to explain the manner in which it commenced. Few real Christians, we believe, are capable of doing either. The work of the Spirit is mysterious and inexplicable, for the wind bloweth where it listeth, and we hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh, or whether it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. That there will be a perceptible difference, however, between their former and present state, seems to be evident from Scripture and the experience of the people of God. They are said in Scripture to be brought from darkness to light, from bondage to liberty, from sickness to health, and from death to life. The transition here is so great and remarkable, that it can hardly be supposed to take place with-

out the perception of some sensible change. Although the precise moment when it commenced cannot be ascertained, yet, from the effects they will be led to say, one thing we know, that, whereas we were once blind, now we see. Whereas sin was formerly the object of our desire and delight, it is now become the object of our hatred and aversion. Unto holiness we once discovered an irreconcilable hatred, but now we perceive its excellence, and esteem and pursue it with the greatest eagerness. Christ formerly appeared unto us as a root out of a dry ground, having no form or comeliness wherefore he should be desired; but now we see him to be the chief among ten thousands, and altogether lovely. Once we were careless of our souls, and neglected their salvation, while death, judgment, and eternity were seldom in our thoughts; but now we see in some measure their inestimable value, and are concerned for their eternal welfare. In religious duties, such as prayer and praise, we formerly had no delight; but now they are pleasant and agreeable, and from their performance we derive the greatest pleasure and the greatest comfort. Once we were careless of our company, prodigal of our time, and vain, if not vicious, in our conversation; but now we associate with the serious, we improve our passing moments, and study, in our conversation, sobriety and usefulness. Once, in short, we had no relish for the word of God, and therefore read it with indifference, or heard it with inattention; but now it is the very food of our souls, and sweeter unto our taste than honey from the comb. Now we know that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God, and now we can say with the ancient church, Thy word was found of us, and we did eat it, and



it was unto us the joy and rejoicing of our heart. Thus, in general, it will be found that persons in whom a good work is begun, will be sensible of some difference between their present and their former state. There is one obvious exception, however, from this general rule, which, for the sake of those to whom it may apply, we shall briefly mention. It is this. When persons are sanctified from the womb, and early called by divine grace, they may be unable to remark any difference of this nature: they cannot recollect a period when they committed sin with greediness, when religious duty was neglected, or when the Saviour was not precious to their souls: from their earliest years they have known the Scriptures, attended unto duty, and felt some delight in the service of God. Now, it would be highly improper in such persons to conclude, that because they perceive no difference between their present and their former state, they are therefore strangers to a good work, and have never tasted that the Lord is gracious. If they see sin to be the greatest evil, and holiness to be the health and happiness of the soul; if they feel supreme love unto God, and joy in him through Christ Jesus, by whom we have received the atonement, they may safely conclude that this work is begun in their hearts, although they cannot say when, or how, it commenced.

2d. Those in whom a good work is begun, *will ascribe the undivided glory of its production unto the power and grace of the Lord their God.* This is a work which, they are sensible, by their own power and wisdom they never could have accomplished. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye who are accustomed to do evil, learn to do well.” To enlighten the mind and purify the heart, to implant new

principles and to excite new desires, is a work which almighty grace alone can accomplish, and therefore this grace deserves all the praise. Hence it is that we find in Scripture the regenerate ascribing such grateful praise unto the grace of God: "not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be all the praise. Not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." While those who are living in sin, and consequently strangers to the operation of this grace upon their souls, have high ideas of their own natural ability, and imagine they can at pleasure renew their hearts and reform their lives, those who are really sanctified by divine grace, disclaim all pretensions of this nature, and ascribe the glory of their begun salvation unto saving and sovereign grace. They acknowledge, with the Apostle, Phil. ii. 13, that it is God who worketh in them, both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Struck with the riches of his distinguishing love unto their souls, they begin the song of Zion in this distant land, saying, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his father; to him be glory, and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen."

3d. The persons in whom this good work is begun, will discover the *greatest love unto the means appointed by infinite wisdom for carrying it on in their souls*. Of these means, none who are acquainted with the first principles of Christianity can be entirely ignorant. They are such as reading and hearing the word, attending upon ordinances, stated and solemn prayer and meditation, self-examination and religious conference. These are the means of divine institution, and which are

admirably calculated, by the blessing of God, for promoting the good work, and carrying it forward to full perfection. By the regular use of these means, the principles implanted in the hearts of the children of God, are exercised and strengthened, their knowledge is increased, their holiness advanced, and their edification and comfort greatly promoted. These are the appointed channels by which God communicates grace and comfort unto their hearts, and therefore they love them and wait upon them. Hence it is, that we find all those whom the Scripture describes as persons in whom this work had commenced, paying the greatest attention to the means of grace. The Bereans searched the Scriptures daily, and David and Daniel prayed several times a day unto God. Isaac went out to meditate at the evening tide, and they that feared the Lord in the days of Malachi, spake often one to another, and a book of remembrance was written. But it is carefully to be observed, that the children of God not only use, but love the means of divine appointment. It is this which, in a peculiar manner, distinguishes them from nominal Christians and formal professors. Many, it is to be feared, attend upon some of these means, without any love unto them or unto God in their hearts. They wait upon them to silence the clamours of an accusing conscience, and maintain an external decency of character among Christians. But these means, while they wait upon them, they do not love; they do not esteem them as institutions of heavenly wisdom, nor do they attend upon them with a single and sincere desire to receive spiritual benefit and growth in grace. This is the character of the children of God, and distinguishes them from specious hypocrites of every description. They love



the means, as institutions of heavenly wisdom, and attend upon them for the great and important purpose for which they were appointed. They desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby, and go unto the altar of God, and unto God, their exceeding joy. With conscious integrity they can say with the Psalmist, Ps. lxxxiv. 1, 2, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." Ps. xxvii. 4—"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple."

4th. Persons of this character will maintain *a constant conflict with the remaining depravity of their hearts*. It is evident from Scripture, that two opposite principles are found in the regenerate in this world, the flesh and the spirit, the new man and the old. It is this circumstance which distinguishes them from angels and saints in heaven, and impenitent sinners upon this earth. The former are perfectly holy, the latter wholly corrupt; but the regenerate are neither, being sanctified only in part. The principles of grace and corruption therefore oppose each other, and occasion a constant and violent struggle. The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these being contrary, the one to the other, they cannot do the things that they would. The conflict which Christians feel in this situation, is perfectly different from that struggle which is sometimes experienced in the breast of sinners who have just entered upon a vicious course. This is a struggle between natural conscience and corrupt inclinations, but that a conflict between the princi-

ples of grace and the power of remaining corruption in the heart. These principles may at times be so equally matched, that the Christian may be at a loss what judgment to form of his spiritual state; nay, upon some occasions, the power of corruption may be so strongly felt, that he may be afraid it is about to regain its dominion, and bring him under its detested sway. This may induce him to exclaim, in the plaintive language of the Apostle, "I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Now the feeling of the power of remaining corruption, and the maintenance of a constant opposition unto it, prove incontestibly that a principle of divine life is implanted, and a good work begun in the soul. Those who do not feel this power are dead, and those who do not struggle against it are completely under its dominion. With this secret enemy, whose strength cannot be wholly discovered, and into whose recesses we cannot enter, the regenerate maintain a constant warfare. They watch over his motions, they resist his attacks, and study by every means to weaken and subdue him. In carrying on this contest, they are sensible of their own inability, and therefore they earnestly solicit divine assistance, by which they may be enabled to mortify the deeds of the body and live; for if we live after the flesh, we shall die: but if we through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live.

5th. Those in whom a good work is begun, *will long for its consummation in the celestial world.* As the progress of this work is attended with growing pleasure, so every addition that is made to it, is an accession to their happiness. Though in some

Christians it has attained a considerable height, yet in all the children of God in this world it is in a state of imperfection. Their knowledge, love, and holiness, are imperfect, and therefore their happiness cannot be complete. Feeling still the power of sin in their souls, harassed with temptations and the allurements of this world, they ardently desire its rapid progress and speedy consummation, when they shall be satisfied with the likeness, and filled with all the fulness of God. Would not the Israelites, when they saw the second temple advancing amid such opposition, earnestly desire its completion, and look forward with joy to the period when the last stone should be laid on that sacred edifice, and an end put to their toils and labours? and must not every Israelite indeed, in whom a good work is begun and carried on amid much opposition, long for that period when it shall be perfected, and when the top-stone shall be brought forth with shouting, crying grace, grace unto it? "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality may be swallowed up of life." "Not as though I had already attained," says Paul, "either were already perfect; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those that are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." "My soul," says the Psalmist, "thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?" "When will the day break," says the longing spouse, "and the shadows flee away? haste, my beloved, and be as a roe upon the mountains of Bether." Thus, from the uniform language of the saints in Scripture, it is evident that they earnestly desire the consummation of this good work in their



souls. When Christ therefore says, "Behold, I come quickly," they joyfully reply, "Amen, even so come, Lord Jesus."

III. We now proceed to lay before you the grounds upon which they may be confident that this work shall be brought to a glorious consummation. He who hath begun the work will perform it to the day of Christ; that is, either to the day of the believer's death, when Christ will receive him to himself, and unite his soul unto the spirits of the just made perfect, or to the last day, called the day of the Lord, when he will raise and glorify his body, re-unite it to his happy soul, and render him in his perfect nature completely blessed. Let us consider the grounds, then, upon which believers may be confident that this good work, which he hath begun, shall be consummated.

1st. We observe that they may be confident this will be the case, because *the work is a work of God*. He it is who hath begun it, and therefore he will also finish it. God "is the rock, and his work is perfect"—Deut. xxxii. 4. Accordingly, in all his operations we observe a gradual progress and tendency to perfection. In the work of creation, though the first principles of all things were made in a moment, yet six days were employed in reducing the chaotic mass to order, and in perfecting the beauty and harmony of the visible world. The same observation applies to the animal and vegetable kingdoms. The child grows and attains to perfect manhood; the seeds spring up and arrive at full maturity. If God, therefore, has begun this work, from his own character and the analogy of nature we may conclude that it will arrive at full perfection. If a person of common prudence, before he begins to

build, calculates his resources, and estimates his power, and we conclude from his known wisdom and ability that he will finish his undertaking, with how much greater certainty may we not rest assured that God, who is infinite in wisdom and almighty in power, will complete the work he has once begun? To leave it unfinished, indeed, would reflect dishonour upon all his perfections, and show that he was either weak or unwise. This at least would be considered as a mark of weakness or of folly among men, and we can never reasonably suppose that it is possible with a wise, perfect, and omnipotent being. As God is an all-wise and absolutely perfect being, his works must partake of his nature, and be perfect also. And if some of them do not arrive at perfection in this world, but are gradually advancing towards it, we may be confident that they will be carried to perfection in the world that is to come. God will not leave his work incomplete. He will finish what he begins; he will perfect what concerns his people; he will work, and none can let him; for his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure.

2d. Real Christians may be confident that the good work shall be continued and perfected, *from the incorruptible nature of that seed which is sown in their hearts by the hand of Heaven.* 1 Pet. i. 23—"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." When Christians are born again, a principle is implanted in their hearts of an immortal nature, and an impression made upon their minds that cannot be effaced. Hence John expressly declares, 1 John iii. 9, that he that is born of God sinneth not, that is, habitually, because his seed remaineth in him. Between this argument for the permanent nature

of religion, drawn from the living principle in the heart of the believer, and the argument for the soul's immortality drawn from its spiritual nature, it must be allowed, there is some analogy. If we conclude from the spiritual nature of the soul that it is destined to an eternal existence, and is immortal, may we not, upon the same principle, conclude from the incorruptible nature of the seed sown in the heart of the Christian, that it shall exist and flourish for ever? No creature, it is true, is independent of God, or can exist without his supporting energy; but as we have no evidence that God will annihilate any creature, we cannot imagine that he would implant this principle with the one hand, and destroy it with the other. On the contrary, from Scripture we learn that it will be preserved and perfected; for believers are not only said to have eternal life abiding in them, but our Saviour assures us that the water he gives unto his people, shall be in them a well of water springing up unto everlasting life—John iv. 14. This well may appear for a season to be obstructed, but the spring is permanent, and possessed of an internal energy, and shall work its way through every obstruction until it spring, and rise, and run into everlasting life. Thus, it is evident from the nature of the principle implanted in the soul, as well as from the intimation of the word, that it shall abide and increase until it arrive at full perfection.

3d. Christians may be confident that the good work, when begun, shall be carried on and perfected, *from the many gracious promises which God has been pleased to make.* It will be unnecessary for me to recite a great variety of promises; but as the word of God will always be sweet unto his people, we shall mention the few following:—



Job xvii. 9—“The righteous also shall hold on his way; and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.” Ps. lxxxiv. 7—“They go from strength to strength; every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.” Ps. xcii. 12—15—“The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; to shew that the Lord is upright.” Hos. xiv. 5—“I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.” Matt. xii. 20—“A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.” John x. 28—“I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.” 1 Pet. i. 5—“Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.” We shall finish this collection of promises with that remarkable declaration, Rom. viii. 30, “Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” Here we behold the different stages of the good work connected with a golden and indissoluble chain, and therefore those who have experienced the commencement of this work, and who have been called by divine grace, may be assured that it shall be carried on until perfectly consummated in glory; for faithful is he who has promised, who also will do it.

4th. They may be confident the good work shall be carried on, from *the unchangeable nature of the love of God towards them*. Man, indeed,

is a being mutable in his nature and changeable in his affections, but God is unchangeable in his nature and immutable in his love. As his love unto his people flows from his own sovereign pleasure, and not from any merit or excellence which they possess, so it is permanent and immutable; for he loves them with an everlasting love. Although, on account of sin, they may experience severe chastisements; though he may visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes; yet his loving-kindness will he not utterly take from them, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail. To their ungrateful and unbelieving complaints upon this head—that God has forsaken them, and their God forgotten them, he replies, “Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me. Since I spake against you, I do earnestly remember you still; I will therefore surely have mercy upon you, saith the Lord.” Now this unchangeable love which the Lord bears unto his people may assure them that the good work shall be carried on and perfected. Will this love leave the work unfinished, especially when connected with almighty power? Will it not rather make all things work together for its gradual completion? Yes; even when it seems to be shaken and they fear its fall, this love is at work in secret, strengthening its foundations, and beautifying its borders, according to the elegant description of the evangelical prophet, wherein the perpetuity of divine love and the progress of this work are closely connected. Is. liv. 10, &c.—“For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee. O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not

comforted ! behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires, and all thy borders with pleasant stones. In righteousness shalt thou be established : for this is the heritage of the servants of the Lord ; and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.”

5th. Real Christians may be confident that the good work shall be carried on and perfected from *the prevalent intercession of Christ, founded upon the merit of his sacrifice*. The intercession of Christ is a doctrine replete with comfort unto every Christian, as it not only encourages him in his daily approach unto a throne of grace, but assures him of progress in sanctification. This intercession consists in his actual appearance before God in the name and nature of his people, in a declaration of the merit of his blood, and a pleading, upon this ground, for the bestowment of every purchased blessing upon his people. By this means they receive such supplies of grace and strength as are necessary to fortify them against temptation, and to preserve the life of grace in their souls. Even before Christ left this world we find some examples of his intercession for his people, and in heaven this work is not discontinued. Unto Peter, when he foresaw his fall, he said, “ Simon, Simon, Satan hath sought to have thee, that he might sift thee as wheat, but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.” And before he left this world, he said in his address to his Father, “ I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am ; that they may behold my glory.” This intercession is permanent and prevalent ; for him the Father heareth always. Is it not, then, evident from the



intercession of Christ, that the good work shall be carried on and perfected? Will it cease to advance, when such a glorious intercessor is interested in its progress, and pleads with never-failing power to this effect? Did Artaxerxes at the intercession of Nehemiah dispatch him with authority to carry forward the building of the walls of Jerusalem, and shall not the intercession of our blessed Lord at his Father's right hand secure the progress and perfection of this building of grace? Yes; we may be assured that he is able to save to the uttermost, or perfectly, as the original word might have been rendered, all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

6th and lastly, upon this branch of the subject. Christians may be confident that the good work shall be carried on and arrive at perfect consummation, *from the evidence they have of its being gradually consummated in the souls of thousands who are now in heaven.* All the saints who are now in glory had this good work begun in their souls while upon this earth—it was gradually carried on amid much opposition, much weakness, ingratitude, and unbelief, on their part. Being the work of God, however, it could not be overthrown,—it rose and triumphed over every opposition, until their souls being dismissed from this earthly tabernacle joined the spirits of the just made perfect, and they now rejoice with them in a finished salvation, and unite with them in casting their crowns before the throne, and ascribing glory unto God and the Lamb for ever and ever. Here, then, Christians have evidence from the experience of all who have gone before them, that a good work in them shall be carried on and completed. This has been the case, without a single exception, with a l

the saints in heaven ; and can any Christian upon earth doubt that it shall be so with him ? Though he is not yet perfect, he is on his way to perfection ; though the work is not completed, it is carrying on, and, under the care of the heavenly builder, shall arrive at perfection. Even in this world, had you observed an architect finish all the buildings which he had begun, you could not entertain a doubt that he was able to perfect one or two which had lately commenced under his care, and yet every earthly architect may die and leave his plans and works unfinished. Surely, then, as the author of this good work is wise, almighty, and immortal, his plans shall be accomplished, his building of grace completed to the glory of his name, and the eternal salvation of those that believe. Lift up, then, your heads and hearts with confidence, ye saved of the Lord ! Only be followers of those who through faith and patience are now inheriting the promises, nor doubt that the good work begun shall be carried on and consummated, and that the top-stone shall be brought forth with shouting—crying, grace, grace unto it ! Then this finished work shall fill you with wonder, joy, and praise ; for then your faith shall terminate in vision, and hope in enjoyment, while love, ever growing with the ages of eternity, shall burn with ardour and delight toward your redeeming God !

Having thus finished what was proposed, we shall now conclude with some practical improvement of what has been delivered.

1st. From what has been delivered you may see the propriety and necessity of inquiring whether or not this work is begun in your hearts. This is an inquiry of great importance, which, if you have hitherto neglected, should be no longer de-

laid. In prosecuting an inquiry of this nature, you may be assisted and directed by attending to what was stated when we endeavoured to draw the character of those in whom the good work was begun. Are you sensible of any difference between your present and former state—between what you were by nature, and what you are by grace? Do you ascribe the undivided glory of the production of this work unto the power and grace of God, saying, “by the grace of God we are what we are?” Do you discover an ardent love unto the means of grace, and do you carefully and constantly employ them for promoting the progress of this work in your souls? Do you feel an incessant internal struggle between the flesh and the spirit—between the power of corruption and the principles of grace in the heart? Are you really concerned to grow in grace, and more ambitious to be holy and humble than to be great or prosperous in this world? Are you looking forward with ardent desire and earnest longing for the completion of this work, saying, O when will the day of our complete redemption come, when we shall be perfected in holiness, and enter into rest? If you are conscious that this is your character, then you have reason to conclude that the good work has actually commenced in your hearts; and it is your duty to praise God for what he has wrought for you, and to wait upon him for the accomplishment of what he has promised to perform; for he who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Christ.

2d. Learn that this doctrine tends to comfort believers under all their struggles, and to excite them to work out the work of their salvation with fear and trembling. This doctrine tends to comfort real Christians under all the opposition they



meet with in the christian life. Their conflicts may be sharp, but they shall terminate in victory—the opposition may be great, but it shall finally be overcome—for the building of grace shall advance in the use of means in spite of all opposition, and arrive at a perfect and glorious consummation. The full persuasion of this important truth comforts their hearts, and induces them to persevere in the path of duty. The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, therefore, is not unfriendly to active virtue. Did the assurance given to Joshua, the illustrious leader of Israel, that he should drive out the Canaanites, and introduce the chosen tribes to the promised land, make him careless and indolent, or did it not encourage him to undertake the arduous task, to seize every favourable opportunity, and to fight in assured confidence of victory? Did the knowledge that Daniel had from the inspired records, that the Lord would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem, render him careless and secure? Did it not encourage him to set his face to seek the Lord by prayer and supplication, and to beseech him to turn away his anger and fury from the city Jerusalem? Did the assurance which Paul received, that all in the ship should be given unto him, and that none of them should be lost, induce him to be inattentive to the use of those means which might contribute to their safety? Would the assurance of victory, unto soldiers engaged in the heat of action, repress their courage, or make them drop their armour? Would it not, on the contrary, inspire them with fresh spirit, and excite them to the greatest exertions of heroic valour? Must not, then, the assurance given unto the Christian, that the good work shall be carried on to perfection, engage him to persevering diligence in the use of

means, and to unremitting exertion in the discharge of duty? Yes, he knows, he feels the force of that encouraging exhortation, Phil. ii. 12, 13, "Work out therefore the work of your salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

3d. and last. From what has been delivered, you may also see the folly and danger of all those who are no way concerned to experience the commencement of this work in their souls, or to promote in the use of means its gradual progress. Some of these may be accounted the wise of the world, and be extremely attentive unto the duties of their secular callings. They may be diligent labourers, ingenious mechanics, industrious farmers, or intelligent manufacturers, and their honest industry may be crowned with success. But, O! remember, that while this good work is not begun, the great business of life is neglected. Without this, all your other labours are but laborious idleness, for you are spending your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not. This work is the one thing needful, to which every other employment must yield; for what is a man profited though he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? This work must commence in time, or it never shall begin; for there is no work, wisdom, nor device in the grave, whither we all hasten apace. O, then, let all those who have hitherto neglected this work, and who are conscious to themselves that it is not begun in their souls, begin no other work while this work is disregarded and forgotten. Let them now begin to work for their souls and salvation. Sure I am it is not now too soon, and, blessed

be God! it is not yet too late. O that this might be the blessed and happy day when many who have hitherto been labouring merely for the body and the meat which perisheth, might begin to labour for that which endureth unto everlasting life, according to the direction of our Lord unto persons of this character, with which we shall conclude this discourse, John vi. 27, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed." Amen.



## SERMON XIV.

### LOOKING FOR THE GLORIOUS APPEARANCE OF OUR GREAT GOD AND SAVIOUR.

TIT. ii. 13.

“ Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”

IT is one of the great excellencies of our holy religion, among many others of which it is possessed, that it sets before us the certain hope of a blessed resurrection and a glorious immortality. In this respect it is distinguished from every other religious system which in any age or nation has appeared in the world. Heathen nations, being destitute of divine revelation, were either entirely ignorant of a future state, or their hopes in reference to it were doubtful and uncertain, being rather the wishes of nature than the assurance of truth. Though some of the sages of antiquity considered the immortality of the soul as highly probable, yet of the resurrection of the body and the pure and perfect happiness of heaven they had not the slightest idea. It is true, to the Jews under the ancient dispensation the knowledge of a future state was partly revealed, and hence our Saviour infers its existence from the declaration made unto Moses, “ I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob.” Under that introductory economy, however, it was but darkly revealed, being left rather to be inferred from some general assertions and prophetic predictions, than clearly announced in any express and positive promise. But now, under the gospel dispensation, life and

immortality are brought to light and set before us in open day. Christ has dispelled the darkness which covered the invisible world, and revealed its glory unto the sons of men. He taught the doctrine of a state of rewards and punishments with a plainness proportionate to its vast importance—he laid it down as a certain principle, and all his other doctrines and precepts proceeded on the absolute certainty of this momentous truth. The believer, therefore, in this world has a hope full of immortality—a hope sustaining him under all the crosses and calamities of life, which prompts him to the performance of arduous duties, excites him to the cultivation of personal purity, and cheers him in the hour of dissolution; for, in the words of our text, he looks for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. The illustration of this passage leads us,

- I. To consider the object of the Christian's hope.
- II. His exercise in reference to it—he looks for.
- III. The blessedness he shall enjoy when this hope is realized.

I. Let us consider the object of the Christian's hope—the glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. By hope here it is obvious we are not to understand the *grace* of hope as existing in the heart of a believer, but the *object* of hope—the glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Now, it is remarkable that in Scripture we never read of the personal appearance of God the Father, though we frequently read of the appearance of God in the person of the Son. Thus, we find he

appeared to the patriarchs and prophets under the Old Testament dispensation as a prelude to his future incarnation ; and when the fulness of time was come, he actually appeared as Immanuel, or as God manifest in the flesh. Yes, “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” But as the Son of God came into this world to instruct mankind in the knowledge of divine truth, to set them an example of all righteousness, and to give himself a ransom for many, so he rose again from the dead, and ascended into the heavenly world, whence we are assured he will come again with power and great glory to raise the dead, to judge an assembled world, and to render unto every man according to his works. This, it is obvious, is a work which none but a divine person can perform ; and therefore Christians are said, in the passage under consideration, to look for the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Though an unlearned reader might be led to think that in this passage the great God and our Saviour are two different persons, yet it ought to be translated, “the great God *even* our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ;” and thus the passage affords us a plain proof of our Lord’s divinity. When he appeared in this world, he was God manifest in the flesh, and when he comes again, he shall appear as the great God and our Saviour, to perfect the redemption and to complete the happiness of his people. His appearance then will be a glorious appearance. Of this we must be convinced, if we consider,

1st. *The end for which he shall appear*, namely, to judge the assembled world. When he came at first into the world, it was not to judge, but to save the world, and accordingly he finished the



work his Father gave him to do. He went about preaching the gospel, healing the sick who applied to him for healing, and after making atonement for sin by the sacrifice of himself, he rose from the dead, and gave commandment to his apostles to go unto all the world, and to preach the gospel to every creature, assuring them that whosoever believed this gospel should be saved, and whosoever believed not should be condemned. Now we are permitted to hear this gospel, and to enjoy many privileges, and are entrusted with various talents, for the use of which we are responsible, and we must all give an account for the reception we have given to the gospel message, and the use we have made of the talents entrusted to our care, and with which we ought to occupy till our Lord and Maker come and call us to account ; for we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, and every one of us must give an account of himself unto God. Is our Lord Jesus Christ then appointed to be the judge of the quick and dead ? Is he to come again for this important purpose, and must not his appearance be great and glorious, corresponding to his character and the work he comes to perform ? When judges are deputed by their sovereign to hold an assize, do they not appear with a pomp and splendour suited to their character and worth ? When the high priest was to present the anniversary sacrifice of expiation under the law, he was simply attired in his sacerdotal dress ; but after he had presented the sacrifice and came out to bless the people, he appeared in his pontifical robes of glory and of beauty. In like manner, our illustrious high priest, having made in his state of humiliation expiation for sin by the sacrifice of himself, entered the true holy of holies by his own blood, and having laid aside the garments of humili-

liation, he will appear at last in the majesty and glory of a judge to bless his people and perfect their redemption. Yes, such an assize was never held before, and such a judge was never seen to fill a throne before, and therefore his appearance shall be incomparably and inconceivably glorious and magnificent. His appearance at the giving of the law was glorious and terrific, but his appearance when he comes as our righteous judge, to call us to account for the manner in which we have obeyed his law and his gospel, will be still more illustrious and tremendous ; for it was only a small nation that appeared before him at the giving of the law from Mount Sinai, but then all nations shall be gathered before him, to hear from his mouth the sentence which shall seal their future destiny for ever.

2d. This must be a glorious appearance, if we consider that Christ Jesus will *then display the glory of his divine perfections to the admiration and delight of his friends*, and the terror and destruction of his enemies. Every object, or every individual, is glorious in proportion as they display the glory of God. Our Saviour existed as the Son of God, and the second person of the Godhead, before he assumed our nature into union with his divine person, and by this assumption of our nature he did not, and could not divest himself of his divine perfections. These perfections he possessed while he tabernacled in this world, though they were veiled under the robe of his humanity, and the humiliation to which he voluntarily submitted. Though he was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, and was crucified in

apparent weakness. In the stupendous miracles he performed, he displayed divine power, and in his transfiguration on the Mount, some rays of his glory beamed from under the robe of his humanity; but this display was partial and temporary, and intended chiefly to prepare the minds of his disciples for witnessing his approaching agony. But when he comes again, he will manifest his divine glory and perfections in such a full, and striking, and public manner, as shall convince all who behold him, that he is a divine person, the Son of God, and the Lord of glory; for then they shall see that none else is judge but God. He will then come in his own glory, or manifesting the glory of his power, his wisdom and omniscience, his holiness and his justice. He will display his almighty power in raising the dead, and calling them before his tribunal; for his powerful voice shall be heard by all who are in their graves, and they must obey it and come forth. He will then display his omniscience and infinite wisdom in the perfect knowledge he has of all human character, and of all their modifications of goodness or of guilt, and in the exact discrimination he shall make in separating the righteous from the wicked. He shall display the glory of his holiness in his marked disapprobation of sin, and of impenitent and unbelieving sinners, who shall be unable to stand before him. And he shall display the glory of his justice in the sentence he pronounces upon the righteous, and the punishment he awards to the wicked. Besides, a visible glory shall radiate from the glorious body of the great Judge of all, and a glory shall result or emanate from the manifestation of his divine person at the day of judgment, which shall impart an inconceivable splendour, majesty, and magnificence to the transactions of this great and terrible day of the Lord.



3d. This appearance must be glorious, if we advert to *the various external marks of grandeur with which it shall be accompanied*. Some of these are revealed to us in Sacred Scripture, but many of them must remain unknown till the day itself declare them. We learn from Scripture that when Christ comes to judge the world, he shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God. As he ascended unto heaven in a bright cloud, so it is probable that he may come in clouds. He shall be seated on a great white throne, more magnificent than any earthly monarch ever filled. He shall come attended with an innumerable company of angels, or with all his holy angels. Heaven for a time shall be emptied of its angelic inhabitants, when they shall be called to attend the grand assize of the human race, and to take part in the transactions of that solemn and decisive day. If an earthly judge is attended with a numerous and splendid retinue to give dignity to his approach, how much greater splendour and magnificence must the attendance of all the holy angels, dressed in their richest robes of glory, add to the appearance of the great Judge of all! If the countenance of a single angel sent to roll away the stone from the door of our Saviour's sepulchre shone like lightning, and his raiment was white as snow, what must be the splendour of all the holy angels when come to attend their Lord at the last day! The splendour of a thousand suns is not to be compared to it. Besides, it must be a glorious appearance when the whole human race—all who have existed, who now exist, or shall be found alive at the coming of our Lord—shall stand before his dread tribunal, to receive a sentence which shall either raise them to the heights of happiness, or sink them into the

depths of everlasting misery. Then the saints of the Lord shall shout for joy, for the day of their complete redemption is come; and then the wicked shall cry for fear, for the day of their final everlasting destruction has arrived. The glory of the second advent of Christ is described in Scripture in language the most sublime. Dan. vii. 9, 10—“I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head was like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.” Matt. xxv. 31, 32—“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations.” Rev. xx. 11—13—“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God: and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.” Now, it is this glorious appearance of the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ, which is the object of the Christian’s hope, and to which he looks forward with anxious expectation.

II. This naturally brings us forward to the second topic we were to consider, namely, the Christian's exercise in reference to this object of his hope—"he looks for it."

1st. This exercise obviously implies *a firm conviction of its reality*. It is the believer only who looks for the glorious appearance of the great God, even our Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ, for he is as much convinced of its reality as if he saw it with his bodily eyes. His faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. When we look for an event, that very looking supposes a conviction on our part that the event shall take place, for without this conviction we would not expect it. Thus, if we look for the sun rising to-morrow, it supposes we are persuaded that this glorious luminary shall arise; if, during winter, we look for the return of spring, it supposes we are persuaded that this reviving season shall return; or, if we look for the arrival of a friend, it supposes that he has given us ground to expect his coming at the time appointed. When Christians, therefore, look for the appearance of the Saviour, it supposes that he has promised he will appear, and that, believing his promise, they look for him—for he is faithful who has promised. When he left this world, he promised to his disciples, "If I go away, I will come again, and receive you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also." He instituted the sacrament of his supper, not only as a standing memorial of his death and sufferings, but as a pledge of his second advent, and his disciples accordingly are enjoined to show forth his death until he come again. All true Christians, then, receiving the divine testimony, and embracing the divine promise with



assured faith, look for the second glorious coming of Christ with the utmost confidence—with a confidence free from all doubt and uncertainty. The time will come when the sun shall no more arise, when seasons shall cease to revolve, and the frame of nature shall be dissolved ; but with respect to the second coming of Christ there is nothing within the range of possibilities that can prevent its fulfilment. All power is committed to him in heaven and on earth, and therefore his faithful promise affords absolute security for its accomplishment. Has he said it, and shall he not do it ? Has he spoken it, and shall it not come to pass ? No ; heaven and earth may pass away, but his word shall not pass without its full and final accomplishment.

2d. This exercise also implies *an intense and longing desire for the glorious appearance of our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ*. All true Christians are represented in Scripture as experiencing this feeling, and the Apostle declares that they all love his appearing. Abraham and other Old Testament believers desired to see the day of Christ ; they saw it and were glad : and if these ancient worthies longed to see the day of the Son of God being manifested in the flesh to take away the sins of the world, Christians under the gospel dispensation must look forward with desire to see him coming the second time without sin unto salvation. While scoffing infidels may say in the last time, where is the promise of his coming, and while nominal professors and hollow-hearted hypocrites may wish he would never appear again, Christians who love the Saviour long for his triumphant advent, because it is associated with their complete redemption. While they feel the power of remaining depravity in themselves, and contemplate

the desolations which death is effecting around them, and the miseries which sin and oppression occasion in this world, and when they advert to the happiness they then hope to enjoy, they may well say, "Why is thy chariot so long in coming? Haste, O thou beloved of our souls, and be like a roe on the mountains of Bether." The traveller arrested by the shades of night longs for the dawn of the coming morn, when the darkness shall be removed, and the Christian, whose body is about to be deposited in the grave, longs for the second coming of the Saviour, to ransom his body from the grave, and raise him in his whole person to heaven and everlasting happiness.

3d. This exercise also implies *a patient waiting for the second coming of the Lord*. Though Christ has promised that he will come again, yet, as he has not mentioned the precise period of his advent, Christians patiently wait for its arrival. Unbelief is hasty, and ready to conclude that if the promise is not soon fulfilled it will never be realized; but true faith is not precipitate, but patiently waits, and quietly hopes for complete redemption. Though they dwell in an evil world, are surrounded with numerous enemies, and are borne down with heavy trials, yet they do not murmur or complain, knowing that their light afflictions, which are but for a moment, shall work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, and that he who shall come, will come, and will not tarry. "God is a God of judgment, and blessed are all they that wait for him." Though the vision may be for an appointed time, yet at the end it will come, and therefore they hold fast the beginning of their confidence firm unto the end—knowing that unto them that look for him will he come the second time, without sin, unto salvation.

4th. This exercise implies *habitual diligence in the use of all appointed means, in order to be actually prepared* for the second coming of our Lord. Christians are enjoined, 2 Pet. iii. 14, to be diligent, that they may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless. When we expect the arrival of a much esteemed friend to whom we are under great obligations, we are careful to have every thing in order, that we may give him a proper reception. Is Christ, then, our true friend and most generous benefactor, gone to heaven, and do we look for his coming, when he will receive us to himself, and shall we not be anxious to be ready and prepared for his arrival? He has prescribed to his servants a series of important duties to perform, and entrusted to them various talents with which they are to occupy; and must they not, therefore, if they look for his appearance, be diligent in the discharge of these duties, and in improving their talents, that their Master, when he comes, may approve of their conduct, and receive them into the presence and joy of their Lord? Sensible that in the time that is past they have been remiss and indolent, must not the reflection excite them to double their diligence, and to labour assiduously to redeem the time as they see the day approaching? Must they not be up and doing while it is called to-day, and give all diligence to make their calling and election sure? Yes, forgetting things that are behind, and pressing forward to those that are before, they will add to their faith fortitude, patience, temperance, brotherly-kindness, and universal benevolence, knowing that if these things be in them and abounding they shall neither be idle nor unfruitful in the good work of the Lord. As they know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh, they will be



careful not to allow themselves to be wholly engrossed with the concerns of a present life, lest that day come upon them unawares. They study to have their loins always girt, and their lamps burning, and to be like men waiting for the coming of their Lord. This unwearied diligence in the work of the Lord—this habitual vigilance and circumspection—this holy conversation and godliness, is the only decisive and satisfactory evidence which we can give that we are really looking for the coming of the Lord; without this all other evidence must be doubtful and unsatisfactory.

III. Let us now proceed to consider the blessedness which believers shall enjoy when their hopes are realized at the second appearance of their Lord.

1st. When Christ appears they shall be blessed because *he shall raise their bodies in glory from the grave*. If Christ shall come to judge the whole human race for the deeds done in the body, then the bodies of the sons of men must be raised from the dead. Accordingly, the doctrine of the resurrection is a peculiar doctrine of the gospel, for although, when revealed, it harmonizes with the analogy of nature, and we have an emblem of it in the seed dissolving in the ground, and springing up and appearing anew in autumn, yet its certainty rests upon the divine testimony, and is confirmed by the fact of our Saviour's resurrection from the dead. The resurrection of the body, however, it must be borne in mind, is only a privilege to the believer; for to the wicked and ungodly it is a prelude to their future more severe punishment. When death comes to a Christian it is naturally dreadful, because it makes a separation between his soul and body, consigning the one to the silent grave, there to be reduced to its original

elements; but this separation, we learn from Scripture, is not to be eternal, for the bodies of believers shall be raised from the dust, and re-united to their glorified spirits, and by the new qualities of which they shall be possessed, they shall be fitted for the exercises and enjoyments of the heavenly world. Bodies such as believers now possess, must be incapable of engaging in the occupations, or sharing in the pleasures of the celestial world, for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. The bodies of believers, therefore, must be taken down and dissolved before they can have a building of God eternal in the heavens. Death, therefore, comes to a Christian, not as a punishment, but as a privilege, for to him to die is gain—gain not only to his soul, which immediately enters into glory and joins the spirits of the just made perfect, but gain as to his body, which is then freed from pain and suffering, and is laid in the grave, as in a bed of undisturbed repose, till the morning of the resurrection, when it shall be raised in glory, conformed to the glorified body of the Redeemer, and fitted for enjoying the felicity of a future state. As true Christians have been redeemed in their whole persons through the blood of the Lamb, so our Saviour shall lose no part of his redeemed property, but shall raise it up at the last day. Hos. xiii. 14—“ I will ransom them from the power of the grave ; I will redeem them from death : O death, I will be thy plagues ; O grave, I will be thy destruction : repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.” John vi. 39—“ This is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.” This comfortable truth is clearly taught and distinctly

proved in the 15th chapter of first Corinthians, where the inspired Apostle compares the body of a believer laid in the grave to seed sown in the earth, destined to spring up in new forms of glory, the same in substance, but differing as to the qualities of which they shall be possessed. "It is sown," says he, "in corruption, it is raised in incorruption : it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory : it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power : it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body," refined and purified, and fitted for the exercises and enjoyments of the better country, that is, an heavenly. This truth is confirmed by the resurrection of Christ from the dead ; for his resurrection is the pledge, and proof, and pattern, of the resurrection of all his followers. He is risen as their head and representative, and become the first fruits of them that slept, and all his members shall in due time and order rise and reign with him. He shall change their vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto his own glorious body, according to the working of that mighty power by which he is able to subdue all things to himself. The bodies of believers, therefore, after the resurrection, shall not only be free from disease, infirmity, and pain, but they shall be glorious and immortal—raised above the possibility of decay or dying ; for death shall be swallowed up in victory, and mortality shall be swallowed up of life. What a blessed doctrine is the resurrection to a real Christian, and how admirably calculated, where cordially embraced, to cheer his mind in the immediate prospect of dissolution ! He can then lay his body in the grave as in a bed of rest, where it shall sleep in Jesus till the morning of the resurrection, when it shall be awakened and raised in glory, to partake of the honour and share in the triumphs of that



last, that great and glorious day. It is this which strips death of its terror, the grave of its gloom, and causes the Christian to look forward to the coming of his Saviour with joyful anticipation; for he knows that the day of his complete redemption shall arrive.

2d. Believers shall be blessed at the second appearance of Christ, because he shall *then acknowledge them as his faithful followers, and pronounce a solemn sentence of acquittal upon them*, saying, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, and inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." When believers embrace the testimony of God concerning Christ, and repose on his finished work for salvation, they are justified by faith, have peace with God, and there is to them no condemnation. But the sentence passed upon them in their justification, is a sentence unknown to the world, and perhaps at times unknown to themselves. Even true Christians feel so much remaining depravity, are conscious of so many failings, and chargeable with so many sins, that they often condemn themselves, and may fear that the Lord may ultimately condemn them. Besides, being not men of the world, the world naturally hates them, and says all manner of evil against them falsely. Their characters may be calumniated, their good deeds ascribed to unworthy motives, their failings may be represented as grievous faults, and their follies magnified into crimes, and because they are not angels the world may not allow them to be Christians. Many hard speeches may be uttered against them, and much ridicule cast upon them, by the impious and ungodly; but when the great God and righteous Judge shall appear, they shall be seen in their true colours and genuine character. Then it shall appear that they were

real Christians, and that their hearts were right with God. They shall not appear as persons who were perfectly innocent, but as purchased believers, as saved and sanctified sinners, who by the tenor of their conduct had evinced the soundness of their profession, and the sincerity of their faith. Then their prayers and tears, their acts of kindness and of christian liberality, shall be brought forward as satisfactory evidence of their connexion with Christ, and being possessed of the spirit of their Master. This truth is distinctly stated by Christ himself, Mat. xxv. 34—36, “Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.” What happiness must this public approbation, this recognition of them as the friends of Jesus and the blessed of the Father, afford them who had been defamed and despised in this world! How may it comfort and support them under all the calumnies and contempt the world can cast upon them! Let the world condemn, if the Judge of all acquits; let them call Christians deceivers and evil-doers, if Christ shall say to them, “Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord.”

3d. This leads us to observe, that Christians shall be blessed when their Saviour shall appear, by their being *admitted, in their whole persons, to enjoy the happiness of the heavenly world,* for they shall go away into life eternal. But who can express, or even conceive, the happiness included in this expression—“It doth not as yet

appear what we shall be ; but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." They shall be delivered from all evil, both natural and moral. Every pain shall cease, and every sorrow shall be unknown. No heart shall be sad, no tongue complain ; no tears shall fall from weeping eyes, and no sigh shall heave any labouring breast ; there shall be an end to all suffering, because there shall be no sin. Though the happiness resulting from a removal of all evil may seem to be of a negative kind, yet by persons acquainted with suffering, even this must be highly appreciated. But how must the happiness be enhanced when it is accompanied with the greatest positive enjoyment, when the powers of their minds shall be invigorated and enlarged, when the most delightful objects shall be presented to their contemplation, when they shall obtain satisfactory discoveries of the works and ways, the perfections and providence of God, particularly of the astonishing work of our redemption, when they shall be completely formed into a resemblance of their divine Master, and in his light shall see light clearly ! Then all the senses of the glorified bodies of the saints, and all the faculties of their purified spirits, shall have appropriate objects set before them, from which they shall derive divine and exquisite delight ; they shall be as sensible of the glorious presence of God as they are of the sun at noon-day ; the light of his countenance shall beam upon them, and their intercourse with him shall be immediate and uninterrupted. They shall be employed in a course of the most pleasing and delightful service, for there his servants serve him and see his face. Their happiness shall be enjoyed in the most agreeable and improving society, in the company of angels, and the redeemed from



among the sons of men, of patriarchs and prophets, of saints and martyrs, of all the excellent that have lived on the face of the earth, or shall live in it to the end of time. All these shall be called into one happy, harmonious society; a society into which no enemy shall enter, and from which no friend shall depart; a society which shall enjoy so much as shall satisfy every desire, silence every complaint, and render them completely happy in the presence, and love, and service of the Lord their God. And to complete their felicity, this happiness shall be everlasting; for they shall obtain salvation with eternal glory; they shall have a day without a night, joy without sorrow, and happiness without interruption or termination.

1st. You may learn from what has been said, *the transcendent excellence of true christian hope*. This hope is superior to the hope of worldly men in the object to which it looks, the basis on which it is built, and the happy effects which it never fails to produce. The object of a believer's hope is the glorious appearance of the great God, even our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. The foundation on which it rests is solid and immoveable, being the promise of the true and faithful Witness who cannot lie, his resurrection from the dead, and the power with which he is invested, and which enables him to realize his promises. The effects which this hope produces on the Christian's heart and life are the most important,—it cheers, comforts, and sanctifies him; for every one who hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure. If worldly hope, or the hope of worldly men for the enjoyment of worldly and perishing objects, be compared with this hope, how insignificant does it appear! Its objects are not suited to the dignity of our nature as rational, moral, and immortal crea-

tures—its basis is uncertain, and its effects are intoxicating and deleterious; while the objects of christian hope are suited to our nature, and satisfactory to our souls. Cherish then, Christians, this enlivening, sanctifying, and saving principle. Be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, but hold fast the beginning of your hope and confidence unto the end, and you shall assuredly receive the end of your faith and hope, even the salvation of your souls.

2d. From what has been said you may obtain *an excellent test of character, by which you may examine your state and prospects.* Are you really looking for the glorious appearance of the great God, even our Saviour? Have you a firm faith in its reality? Do you desire it, and long for it? Are you patiently waiting for it, and are you diligent in preparing for it? If this be your character you are happy now, and you shall be happy for ever. You have before you the brightness and blessedness of christian hope, and you may rejoice in hope, for he who comes to be your judge is your friend. He redeemed you by his blood, and after acquitting you, and pronouncing you blessed of his Father, he will bring you to inherit the heavenly kingdom prepared for you. But if, on the other hand, you doubt or disbelieve the gospel, feel no desire for the glorious appearance of Jesus Christ, and are discovering no diligence in the use of means, no preparing for his appearance, then you must be miserable now, and have nothing before you but the blackness of darkness for ever, for you are living without God and without hope in the world. But although your present condition is deplorable, it is not desperate. The hope of the gospel is still set before you, and the way to the city of refuge is still open to you. O be persuaded then to flee instant-

ly for refuge to this hope—embrace the Saviour—rely upon his obedience and blood for pardon, acceptance, and eternal life. Love him, and live to him, and you shall find faith in Jesus to bring peace to your conscience, and purity to your hearts, and then, when Christ your life shall appear, you shall also appear with him in glory, and be for ever with the Lord.

3d. You may see from this subject how *the doctrines and discourses of the gospel are admirably suited to comfort Christians* under all the distresses and calamities of a present life. These, indeed, are numerous and oppressive, and without the consolations of the gospel would be overwhelming. But Christianity is the religion of the afflicted; she opens abundant sources of consolation to suffering believers, so that if our afflictions abound, our consolations by Christ Jesus also abound. Christ is the consolation of Israel, and although as to his bodily presence he has left the world, he has not left his followers comfortless in it. He comes and blesses them with his gracious presence, he renews them with the influences of his Spirit, and he not only gives them promises of present support, but the assurance of future and complete deliverance. He informs them that all their afflictions are necessary to promote their spiritual improvement, and that they shall all work together for their good, and that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in them. Their bodies at the resurrection shall be conformed to his glorious body, and shall become inlets to the purest and most refined delights. Then those eyes which often in this world shed tears of penitential sorrow shall not only have them wiped away, but shall behold the brightness and beauty of the heavenly world. Those



ears which often in this world heard the sounds of sorrow and the voice of lamentation, shall hear the new song of praise and the shout of triumph. Those hands which often hung down with grief, or were lifted in prayer, shall hold the palm of victory, or the harp of praise. Those feet which often visited the abodes of distress, or trode the courts of God's sanctuary on earth, shall walk the streets of the New Jerusalem, or stand before the throne of God and the Lamb; and those heads which were bowed down with grief, or were bent under the weight of years, shall be lifted up with joy, and be adorned with crowns of glory which never fade away. Let Christians then be comforted under all their sufferings, their sorrows, and bereavements. Let them not sorrow as others who have no hope, but let them be exceedingly joyful under all their tribulations. Let them lift up their heads with joy, for the day of their complete redemption draweth nigh. Let them look to him and for him, for he that shall come will come, and will not tarry, and blessed are all they that wait for him. It was the hope of the second appearance of the Saviour which the primitive Christians cherished with peculiar delight, which filled them with joy under all their tribulations, inspired them with invincible fortitude, and made them meet death without terror; and real Christians still have the same interest in this glorious event; yet if we do not constantly keep it in view by the exercise of a lively faith, it will not have the same practical influence on our temper and deportment as it had upon theirs.

4th and lastly. This leads us to observe that you may see from this subject *what powerful excitement it affords to diligence and activity* in the discharge of christian duties, and the cultivation of

holy and heavenly dispositions. Do we look for the dissolution of this world, and the glorious appearance of the great God, even our Saviour? Then what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God. How regular and indefatigable ought we to be in the performance of all personal, domestic, and social duties, and how pure, holy, and elevated ought we to be in our views and feelings, desires and dispositions! To look for the blessed hope of the glorious appearance of our Saviour, is a most delightful prospect, which must strengthen us under temptation, soothe us under sufferings, and not only disarm death of terror, but even make it desirable, because it comes to a Christian as a messenger of peace, calling him away from a land of darkness to a land of light, from a vale of tears to a place of joy, and from a field of conflict to the crown of victory. Were we only to realize the present inspection and the future advent of our Lord, our duties would not be performed in the cold and careless manner in which we too often discharge them, nor would our pursuit of worldly objects, and pleasures, and enjoyments, be so ardent and unremitting; on the contrary, it would become our supreme desire and constant endeavour to be *actually* prepared for the coming of our Lord. We would account no solicitude too great, no effort too arduous, and no sacrifice too expensive to secure this happy result. Let Christians, then, learn to call into operation all the energies of their renovated nature, and live in the constant exercise of every grace, and the faithful discharge of every duty, and to be always like men waiting for the coming of their Lord; for blessed are those servants who, when their Master cometh,

shall be found watching. Thus, they shall comply with the injunction of the Apostle, 1 John ii. 28, "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming." Amen.



## SERMON XV.

### THE MANNER IN WHICH PASTORS OUGHT TO FEED THE FLOCK OF GOD.

1 PETER v. 2.

“ Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.”

THE work of a minister of the gospel must be allowed, by all who understand it, to be honourable, arduous, and important. To the faithful discharge of the various duties of the sacred office no man with any natural or acquired abilities is equal; but in humility he must adopt the language of the Apostle, “ who is sufficient for these things ?” It must, therefore, be of the greatest importance for those who enter upon this office, to be satisfied that they have been called of God, in order that, in the use of means, they may lay claim to that encouraging promise, “ Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” In the church of Christ, as in every well regulated society, a proper order is established, which, if carefully maintained, and uniformly observed, tends to promote the peace, harmony, and happiness of the whole. She is not left to be modelled according to the humour or fancy of men, or to be entirely governed by the maxims of human policy and prudence; but certain laws are enacted, and directions given in Sacred Scripture, which are carefully to be observed, and constantly followed, and to the neglect of which the disorders and divisions which prevail in the christian church are in a great measure to be attributed. These rules, plain

and simple like the gospel itself, are apt to be despised by men of worldly wisdom, who, by substituting the maxims of human policy in place of the directions of inspired wisdom, have manifested their ignorance and folly, and loaded the church with a burden which she is unable to bear. The church being a society closely connected is evidently interested in the conduct of all her members, especially in the character and conduct of those who fill places of public trust and authority. As in civil society the interest of the community at large in a great measure depends upon the ability and integrity of those who hold public stations, and to whom the execution of the law is committed; so in the church of Christ the interest of religion and the peace of the christian community in a great measure, under God, depend upon the ability and fidelity of those who rule, and are appointed the public guardians of virtue and religion. Aware of this important truth, the Apostle having in the former chapter exhorted Christians in general to attend to the duties of their station, and to be holy in all manner of life and conversation, in the beginning of this chapter addresses the public teachers of religion, and exhorts them to be faithful and diligent in the discharge of their duty. "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed." Then follows the solemn charge, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind." In treating this subject it is proposed, in humble dependence upon divine aid,

I. To show what we are to understand by the flock of God.

II. To consider the duty to which those who have oversight are exhorted—they are to feed the flock of God.

III. To illustrate the motives by which they ought to be influenced in undertaking, and animated in discharging the duties of their important office.

I. We are to show what we are to understand by the flock of God, and why they are thus denominated. Here it must be observed, that, in the early ages and eastern countries, the pastoral life was more common and honourable than in modern times. As their wealth was then principally derived from their flocks, or rather consisted in their number and increase, men of affluence did not deem it below their dignity to be employed in tending them, and their language was formed and their manners regulated by their employment. Hence it is that in Scripture the pastoral style is so frequently introduced, and our Saviour is compared unto a shepherd, and his followers to his flock, Is. xl. 11, “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.” Our blessed Lord, when he appeared in this world, claimed this amiable character, when he said, John x. 11, “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.” As the sheep of Christ are distinguished in Scripture from the rest of the world, so by this term we are not to understand professing Christians in general, but true believers who are possessed of the spirit and temper of Christ—who imitate his example and obey his laws. These are different from the rest of the world in their principles and conduct, and they stand in a peculiar relation to Jesus Christ.



For them he lived, died, rose again, and lives for evermore, and conducted by his unerring hand they shall finally be brought into the fold of heaven. It is true, indeed, those who have the oversight of the church in this world, have persons of mixed and opposite characters under their care. The good and the bad are here blended together; the sheep are mingled with the goats; wicked men and hypocrites assume the christian name, join the christian church, and frequently sit before God as his people sit. To persons of this character the servants of God are not to be inattentive; for their conversion and salvation they are earnestly to labour; they must faithfully warn them of their duty and danger, that, if they are not happily instrumental in saving their souls, they may at least deliver their own. Characters of this complexion, however, notwithstanding of their profession, do not belong to the flock of God, nor can they be ranked among the sheep of Christ. With a very different master they stand connected, and to a different fold they must belong. If they continue in this connection, though for a season they may associate with the flock of Christ, yet a final and everlasting separation, we are assured, shall take place. By the flock of God, then, we are to understand *real Christians*—persons to whom the character drawn by Christ applies, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” They are styled a flock, because they are of a social disposition; they delight to meet in a public manner to worship the Lord God of their fathers, and to hear the words of eternal life. Possessed of a divine nature, and united by one spirit, they are averse to contention or separation, and desire to live in love and concord with one another, preserving the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. As they are all agreed

upon the great and leading doctrines of religion, it is not every little difference of sentiment upon other points that will produce any difference of affection. As brethren they will live together in unity, and rejoice to feed together upon the green pastures, or to lie down beside the still waters. They are a flock too, because in age, strength, and experience there is a natural and beautiful diversity among them. In this society there are little children, young men, and fathers; or, to preserve our Saviour's pastoral style, sheep and lambs. Here we find persons of different standing and of different strength. Some, just born again, are weak and feeble, beginning to tread the green pastures with trembling steps; while others, advanced in knowledge and experience, are strong in the Lord and the power of his might. And, finally, they are a flock, because of themselves they are weak and defenceless—unequal to their own direction or support. Their safety consists in flying by prayer unto him who is the chief shepherd and bishop of their souls, and whose name is a strong tower to which the righteous may run and be safe. Feeble and defenceless however of themselves, they are the flock of God. In this consist their honour, their safety, and happiness. Unto them the good shepherd addresses these animating words: "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." They are the flock of God, as they were chosen of him in Christ Jesus before the world was. Eph. i. 4—"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." John vi. 37, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." They are his flock because they were purchased with the blood of the Son of God. Hence the emphasis of that solemn

charge given unto the Ephesian elders, Acts xx. 28, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." They are the flock of God, moreover, because, being redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, they are *his* peculiar or purchased people, and the objects of *his* special care. His eyes are continually upon them, his ear is ever open to their cry, and his hand is ready to be stretched out for their deliverance or defence. He constantly superintends all their concerns, watches over them with unremitting attention, and is their refuge and strength in the day of trouble, and at the hour of death. In faith of this the pious Psalmist triumphs when he says, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters." As a proof of his concern for their interest he has appointed an order of men in his church, to whose care his sheep are committed, and for whom they are to be accountable in the day of the Lord.

II. But this naturally leads us to consider the duty to which those who have the oversight are exhorted by the Apostles—they are to feed the flock of God which is among them. This is a duty of great extent and vast importance, including a variety of branches, the chief of which may be comprehended under the three following particulars.

1st, Those who have the oversight must feed the flock of God, by *teaching them the truth as it is in Jesus, and preaching the doctrines of the glorious and everlasting gospel*. Mankind being at present in a lapsed state, are naturally ignorant of God and of the knowledge of his will. As



knowledge is the foundation of all religion, so the Almighty has been pleased not only to favour us with a divine revelation, but to appoint an order of men to be public teachers of his people, to instruct them in the knowledge of divine truth, to inform their understandings and direct their judgments by bringing the truths of God from the sacred treasury, and placing them before them in the clearest and most impressive light. The character of faithful pastors in this respect is beautifully drawn by the ancient prophet, speaking in the name of the Lord. Jer. iii. 15—"I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." The ignorant are to be instructed in the first principles of religion, and the people of God, who know in part, are to be taught more perfectly, and to have knowledge communicated unto them suited to their capacity and experience. Spiritual knowledge is the food of the soul, and with this aliment the flock of God must be fed; it is not therefore with any other species of knowledge that they are to be entertained by their public instructors. It is not with vain speculations, with philosophical essays, with pompous declamation, or loose harangues upon some dry and uninteresting subject, that the sheep of Christ are to be fed. With these, indeed, foolish teachers may feed their own vanity, but they can never edify the people of God; they are neither suited unto their spiritual taste nor calculated to promote their edification; on the contrary, the flock of God must be fed with solid and substantial gospel truths, with the knowledge of Christ and him crucified, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Christ is the bread of life, and the only suitable food unto the children of his family. The stewards of his household, therefore, must imitate the con-

duct of one who well knew his duty as a public teacher, and who, although he was a man of learning and ability, determined not to know anything among his hearers, but Christ and him crucified. The cross of Christ is the sum and substance of Christianity. With this subject, viewed in its proper extent, all that is essential to salvation is connected. Here the divine nature and perfections are illustriously displayed, the ruin and remedy of man are revealed, the infinite evil of sin and the greatness of the love of God are exhibited, and therefore, in connection with it, every doctrine of Christianity is to be taught, for edifying the body of Christ, humbling human pride, and showing the hearers of the gospel where righteousness and salvation can only be obtained; for other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. If Christ crucified be not taught, Christianity reverts to the religion of nature, and is deprived of its distinguishing excellence and peculiar glory. We do not mean, however, that public teachers are to dwell perpetually upon the doctrines and comforts of the gospel; the whole counsel of God is to be declared, divine truths are to be taught in their mutual connection and dependence, and in connexion with the grace of God, reigning through righteousness unto eternal life. Every revealed truth is to be brought into view, the terrors of the law with the comforts of the gospel, the threatenings of the word with the promises of grace, the duties of the christian with the privileges of the believer. The practical influence of the great doctrines of the gospel is to be shown, and these doctrines are to be exhibited as the true sources of christian morality. From this connected view of the scheme of divine truth, our hearers will learn its excellency and importance; they will see what is prepared for the sinner, as well

as promised unto the saint. Christ, however, is still to be kept in view, for the different lines of divine truth meet in him as in their common centre. Thus it is, that those who have the oversight must feed the flock of God, by rightly dividing the word of truth, and giving to every one his portion of meat in due season. They must follow the example of Paul and his fellow labourers in the gospel; of whom he declares, Col. i. 28, "Whom we preach, warning every man, teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

2d. Those who have the oversight must feed the flock who is among them, by *dispensing the ordinances of divine appointment*, superintending their morals, exhorting them to the practice of duty, and reproving or rebuking them for the sins into which they may occasionally fall. The positive institutions of our religion are few in number, simple in their nature, and significant in their external signs. Their administration is committed unto the ministers of the gospel, who are to dispense them in their original purity and simplicity, by carefully guarding against corruption or profanation, whether by popish addition or promiscuous participation. The nature and intention of these ordinances are to be explained, the character of those who may worthily partake of them is to be drawn, the friends of Jesus are to be encouraged to wait upon them, and his enemies warned of their danger if they impiously approach unto the table of the Lord. For this purpose, pastors must superintend and examine the flock, that, as far as human knowledge can reach, they may distinguish between the ignorant and intelligent, the precious and the vile. They must study to be acquainted with the state and general character of their flock, with



their knowledge or ignorance, their tempers and passions, with their temptations and dangers. From this knowledge the faithful pastor will derive unspeakable advantage. He will be able to teach in a more close and appropriate manner, and his public discourses, as well as private exhortations, will be discriminating and applicable. His acquaintance with their diseases, will enable him to direct to the remedy; his knowledge of their tempers and ruling passions will open his way to the heart, and lead him to address them with closeness and effect. By this means he will be enabled more effectually to obey the apostolical direction, to warn the unruly, to comfort the feeble-minded, to support the weak, to succour the tempted, and to be patient towards all men. This superintendence of the flock, however, is to be exercised with the greatest delicacy and prudence. It is not to be maintained by the public teacher to manifest his authority, or to gratify an idle curiosity, and far less to indulge a censorious temper of mind; but, like the inspection of an indulgent parent over a large and numerous family, it must be blended with love and compassion, and accompanied with a sincere desire to instruct or reclaim. While the faithful pastor is thus employed in watching over his flock, he will no doubt have occasion to observe with regret, that, notwithstanding of all his care and instruction, some of them will be going astray, being unhappily seduced into the paths of error, or allured into the ways of vice. If their offences are of a private nature, private admonition is to be used; but if they are public and scandalous, from false delicacy he is not to be silent, or with criminal partiality to pass them without notice, but by the regular exercise of discipline he is to endeavour to bring them to a sense of their sin, and to lead them to repentance and amendment of life.

This duty is not of easy performance, and the proud spirit of some professing Christians increases the difficulty; but the faithful pastor is not to be so far discouraged, as upon that account to decline or neglect it. The command of God must be obeyed, and the direction of the Apostle followed, 2 Tim. iv. 2, "He must reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine."

3d. Those who have the oversight must feed *the flock, by exhibiting, in their own conduct, an example of universal holiness.* There is nothing more amiable and attractive than a holy and well ordered conversation. Its influence, especially in those who fill superior stations, is powerful and persuasive, and therefore, though every Christian should study in his place to be exemplary, yet, in a peculiar manner, this is incumbent upon the public teachers of religion. Their Lord and Master expressly requires this, the world expects it, and they are bound to shine as lights in the world. Hence they are enjoined in the verse immediately following the text, "to be ensamples to the flock;" and how this example is to be exhibited, another Apostle more fully declares, 1 Tim. iv. 12, "Be thou an example of the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." Pastors therefore are not only bound to instruct their hearers in the doctrines and duties of religion, but they are to practise in their own lives the duties they enjoin. Without this they will not be able to command general esteem, nor will their labours and instructions be attended with much success. In vain will they explain the doctrines of the gospel, or enforce its precepts, if they do not exhibit to their hearers the sanctifying influence of the one, and a sacred and uniform obedience to the other. Mankind are so consti-

tuted, that they will always be more disposed to believe what they see, than what they hear, and therefore when they observe the life and doctrine of their teachers to be at variance, they will readily conclude that they do not believe what they teach, and that their characters are hollow and hypocritical. As our blessed Lord, who was the great and good shepherd, not only instructed men in the knowledge of their duty, but set them an example that they might follow his steps, so those who are employed under him in the work of the ministry, are to combine example and precept in the discharge of their duty. They are to exhibit the beauty and excellence of religion in their own conduct, to be patterns unto their people in all holy conversation and godliness, that in some measure they may say with the Apostle, be ye followers of us, even as we also are of Christ. In the whole of their behaviour they must be blameless and harmless, their conduct must correspond with their characters, and be calculated to edify the flock of God. From them a higher degree of holiness is expected than from the rest of the world. Their station requires it, for their behaviour will be observed with minuteness, and examined with severity. Allowances that will be made for other men will not be granted unto them—the eyes of their people will be continually upon them, and therefore it concerns them to be cautious and circumspect in the whole of their conduct. They must not only abstain from all positive evil, but even avoid the least appearance of it. They must not venture to approach the doubtful limits, but to the conviction of every candid observer keep themselves unspotted from the world. Far from being intemperate, they must be remarkable for sobriety; far from being rigorous or unjust, they must be generous and forgiving; and instead



of being guilty of any indecency or levity, they must rather lean to the safer extreme of gravity and reserve. Nay, even in things indifferent, and that would offend the flock, lest they should hurt their usefulness among them, they are to abstain. Thus they are to be blameless and harmless, the sons and servants of God without rebuke, shining in the beauties of holiness as lights in the world. This purity of conduct will impart dignity to their characters, and add weight unto their public instructions. Their flock will listen to them with pleasure, being convinced that they speak from the heart, and their exhortations or reproofs will be received with attention and acceptance. Without this exemplary conduct their characters will never rise to such a degree of respectability as to command esteem, nor acquire such authority as to give weight to their instructions. They may, without this, indeed, be regarded as men of learning and genius, and be coveted as gay and agreeable companions, but they will always be looked upon by the sober and discerning as persons destitute of religion; and for the want of personal religion no learning or genius in the clerical character can compensate.

III. Having considered the duty to which those who have the oversight are exhorted, we now proceed to illustrate the motives by which they ought to be influenced in undertaking, and animated in discharging, the duties of their important office. They are to take the oversight, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind. By taking the oversight, we may either understand their compliance with the call of the church, and being regularly ordained to this sacred office, or rather, as the original word seems to sig-



nify, the doing the works of faithful pastors, in the regular discharge of all the important duties incumbent upon them. Both of these ideas we shall keep in view—they are so closely connected that they run into one another; for the same motives which ought to induce men to undertake the one, should likewise prompt them to perform the other.

1st. Pastors are *not to take the oversight with reluctance and aversion*, or perform their duty through constraint and necessity. In the early ages of the Church, when the minds of Christians were deeply impressed with a sense of the importance of the pastoral office, and when the public teachers of Christianity were exposed to many hardships, and to violent persecution, it was with difficulty that persons, properly qualified, could be prevailed upon to take charge of particular churches. Much entreaty was often found necessary to induce them to accept of the pastoral office. Necessary, however, as such persuasion might be at some former periods, there is no occasion for it in modern times. Now some appear to take the oversight so very willingly that they do it in direct opposition unto the declared inclination of the flock. But whether this willingness arises from a just and increasing sense of the importance of the office, or from the want of any sense of it at all, we shall not presume to determine. One thing, however, we may safely affirm, that the diffidence with which young men undertake the work of the ministry and the care of souls, will always be in proportion to the sense they entertain of its importance, and that although they will not be inattentive to the call of providence, and the voice of the flock, yet they will wait this call, knowing that if they run unsent they cannot expect to profit. As they are to take the oversight, not by constraint, but willingly and

of a ready mind, so they are to perform the duties of their office with cheerfulness and alacrity. Their service must not be the reluctant service of a slave, but the free and cheerful service of a son. They are not to regard their duty as a drudgery, as a task to which they submit with the utmost aversion, and in the performance of which they have no pleasure. The dead-weight of necessity must not compel them to go the dull round of external duty, nor must they be influenced by the fear of censure, or the apprehension of worldly consequences, but they must enter into the spirit of their work, and esteem their duty their honour and delight.

2d. They are *not to be influenced by the desire of worldly gain*, or, as it is expressed in the text, by the love of filthy lucre. Gain, or the immoderate love of money, is a root of all evil. From this, as from a copious fountain, flow many of the streams that defile both Church and State. This sordid desire has the most pernicious influence upon society, and is more extensively hurtful than we are apt to imagine. It is this that renders the statesman covetous and intriguing, the trader fraudulent, the judge unjust, and the churchman ambitious. Nay, this principle has induced some men to desert Christianity altogether, and to attach themselves to a society where gain is of easier and more instant acquisition. "Demas hath forsaken us," saith the Apostle, "having loved a present world;" and Demas has not been the only character whose love to the world has produced infidelity or occasioned a total apostacy. Now, though the wisdom of God has appointed that they who preach the gospel should live by the gospel, yet this living surely ought not to be the leading motive by which its ministers should be influenced in preach-



ing it. They are to be animated by a much more noble and disinterested principle, that they may be able to say in sincerity to their flock, "We seek not yours, but you." How humiliating is the charge that the Lord brings against the pastors in his ancient Church, by Micah, when he says, Micah iii. 11, "The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire." With a purity of intention, therefore, incompatible with worldly views, and an elevation of sentiment becoming their sacred character, pastors should be willing, when called to take the oversight, to do everything in their power to promote the glory of God and the salvation of the souls of men.

3d. This leads me to observe, that they ought to be influenced by *a single and supreme regard unto the honour and glory of God*. This motive should animate Christians in the whole of their conduct, for whatever we do we are to do all to the glory of God. Can a nobler motive influence the minds of men, or a higher animate the saints and angels in heaven? They can aim at nothing greater, and therefore it must be true greatness to keep this in view. Although the force of this motive will be felt by every Christian, yet in a peculiar manner it ought to operate upon the faithful pastor, and excite him to the greatest exertions in the service of God. He is the devoted servant of the Lord, and for the glory of his Master he must earnestly labour. To manifest the glory of God in the salvation of men is the great design of the gospel he preaches, and shall he not keep this grand object invariably in view? It is not to seek his own glory, or to gratify his vanity and ambition, that he should desire to be engaged in this service; but he must come with all the desire of his mind, willing that his own honour be laid in

the dust, if thereby the glory of God be displayed and placed upon the throne. This glory must be dearer unto him than any earthly joys; nay, dearer unto him than his own life. To promote this, he must deem it life to live; and to declare it, he must be willing to die, accounting not even his own life dear unto himself, that he may finish his course with joy, and testify the gospel of the grace of God.

4th. They must be influenced by a *sincere and ardent love unto Jesus Christ*. This divine principle is necessary to animate them in their services, and to give life and energy to their public labours. Upon those who are strangers to the love of Christ we can have no dependence for continuing and abounding in the work of the Lord. The want of this will cramp their exertions, or give them a partial and confined direction. Faithful pastors, therefore, must feel something of that love, the wonders of which they unfold to others; they must be able in some measure to say with the Apostle, 2 Cor. v. 14, "For the love of Christ constraineth us." This heavenly principle will fill their hearts with every generous emotion, and induce them with ardour and alacrity to discharge the most difficult duties. As the Saviour from self-moving love came to accomplish the salvation of men, so he wishes that from love to him men should preach this wonderful salvation to their brethren. As love unto a master is necessary in a servant in this world, to engage him to perform his duty with cheerfulness and care, so love to our Great Master is equally necessary in the professed servant of Christ, to engage him to attend unto his duty with pleasure and edification. This is evident from the memorable question our Lord put to Simon—"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" When

that disciple, appealing to the omniscience of his Master, could reply, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee?" the solemn charge immediately followed—"Feed my lambs; feed my sheep"—John xxi. 15—17. Unto the hearts of his servants our heavenly Master principally looks—the labours he loves are labours of love—services flowing from love unto him as their fountain, and directed to the glory of God as their ultimate end. Without this love unto Christ, the services of pastors will be restrained and partial, and the labour and fatigue attending the performance of their duty will be a weariness and burden; but, animated by this soul-transporting motive, they will be ready to encounter every danger, and to endure every hardship, never imagining they can do or suffer too much for him who accounted not his own life dear unto himself, but willingly gave it a ransom for theirs.

5th and lastly. This leads us to observe, that those who have the oversight of the flock ought to be influenced by an *ardent concern for the salvation of the souls of men*. Impressed with a deep sense of the worth of their own souls, and concerned for their salvation, they must feel the most tender concern for the salvation of the souls of others. Next unto his own glory, the salvation of men was the great object God had in view in contriving and executing the scheme of redemption. It was to bring many sons unto glory. This end, therefore, must be invariably kept in view, and give a decisive direction to the whole of a pastor's conduct. To gain subjects to the Redeemer's kingdom, to save souls from death—this must be the motive by which he is to be influenced in undertaking, and animated in discharging, the duties of his office. And can a more honourable and generous motive actuate the human mind? This



is christian charity—this is divine benevolence ! To save a soul from death is a more noble achievement than to save a sinking nation or to conquer the world ! What a divine—for it is truly a god-like—employment ! This is an office in which the Son of God held it honourable to appear. A saviour of souls he lived, died, rose again, and lives for evermore, and is with his faithful servants unto the end of the world. This is a service in which angels would engage with ardour, triumph if they succeeded, and if they did not, triumph in having attempted it ! This is a service in which the ministers of Christ are honoured to be employed, and surely they ought to engage in it with ardour and enthusiasm. The soul of man surpasses in dignity and excellence the visible creation. Though many of our brethren seem to have no more sense of the worth of their souls than the mountain has of the gem it covers, yet every man shall know its value either in being lost or saved for ever. A sense of the worth of souls, and an ardent desire to promote their salvation, should incite every pastor to the utmost diligence and most vigorous exertion. He should feel, in some measure, their misery if they perish, their felicity if saved, and his own if he saves them. He should never forget that his care or neglect of the souls committed unto him shall be unto him matter of eternal joy or everlasting sorrow. With the most tender concern, therefore, and unwearied diligence, he should travail as in birth, until Christ be formed in the souls of his people the hope of glory. And if he is the happy and highly-honoured instrument of saving one soul, how rich the prize ! how certain and glorious the reward ! “He that converteth a sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death and hide a multitude of sins. They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament ; and they

that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever!"

Thus I have finished what was proposed upon this subject. I am sensible that my youth and inability would have rendered it more becoming in me to have occupied the place of a humble hearer, than to have appeared as a public instructor to this venerable auditory.\* The duty, however, was neither of my choice nor desire, but having been officially called unto it, I have represented a few things which appeared to me to be of some importance, and I shall be extremely happy if I be the only person in this assembly who has any occasion of being reminded of them. Having said so much with regard to the pastoral office, it will be unnecessary for me to make any formal address unto you. My reverend fathers and brethren, let us all attend unto the duties of our station. Let us be careful to teach our people the truth as it is in Jesus, to watch over them with unremitting care, and to be holy and exemplary in the whole of our conversation. In our doctrine let us show uncorruptness, sincerity, gravity, sound speech that cannot be condemned. Let us invariably act with a view to the glory of God and the good of souls, and remember that while we have the oversight of the flock, there is One who is over us as our Master, and to whom in a little we must all give account. Laying aside, therefore, all party or interested views, let it be our only study and strife who shall be most holy and humble, most faithful and diligent in the discharge of his duty. Thus let us take heed unto ourselves and our doctrine, for in doing this we shall both save ourselves and those that hear us.

\* This Sermon was delivered before the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, October 1791.

With respect unto you, the christian people and members of the flock of God, let me exhort you to live in peace and concord with one another. Beware of dissension and debate; for if ye bite and devour one another, beware that ye be not consumed one of another. As the elect of God, therefore, holy and beloved, put on bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another; if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. Listen to the instructions of your teachers with candour and humility of mind, and with a sincere desire to know the will of God, in order to practice. Attend unto your duty as Christians, and improve your privilege as Protestants, by searching the Scriptures daily whether the things you hear be agreeable unto the word of God. Receive no doctrine upon the authority of the teacher who delivers it, but examine what you hear by what you read, that you may obey our Saviour's direction, who charges all his followers to take heed not only how they hear, but what they hear. Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world; for as there were false prophets also among the people, even so there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction; and many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. Beware, therefore, lest, being led away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your stedfastness. Remember that your safety and protection are from the Lord, and never expect from the servants what the Master alone can confer. Know them who



labour among you and admonish you, and esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Let the elders who rule well be accounted worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in word and doctrine. Be regular in your attendance upon public ordinances. Wait upon them, not to have your ears amused with strange novelties, or charmed with the elegance of composition and the graces of a studied oratory, but to have your understandings enlightened, and your hearts brought under the sanctifying influence of the gospel. Lay aside all malice, and guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil-speakings, and as new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. Bear with the infirmities of faithful pastors, and do not expect from them the perfection of angels, when you know they are but men. Show your love unto them, not only by giving them all due encouragement in the discharge of their duty, but by earnestly praying for their direction, assistance, and success. To this, your own benefit, the comfort of your teachers, and the enlargement of the kingdom of Christ, all powerfully incite you. By this means you shall be mutual comforts unto each other in this world, and have the pleasing hope of rejoicing together in the world that is to come, when faithful pastors and believing people shall be led and fed by the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne, and when he shall not only wipe away all tears from their eyes, but remove every source of sorrow from their hearts. Heb. xiii. 20, 21—“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

## SERMON XVI.

### THE RANSOMED OF THE LORD RETURNING AND COMING UNTO ZION.

Is. xxxv. 10.

“ And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away ”

To persons who groan under the bondage of corruption, and are earnestly desirous of enjoying the freedom and felicity of the future world, the truth contained in the words which we have just now read, must be exceedingly soothing and consolatory. Although the passage may have a primary reference to the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, yet, as this return was not accompanied with songs and everlasting joy, but with the mingled sounds of grief and gladness, we are warranted to conclude, that it is ultimately designed to describe the return of the true Israel of God to the celestial Zion after the resurrection, and at the consummation of all things. The illustration of the passage, you will observe, naturally leads us,

I. To consider the character of the persons who are here introduced—“ the ransomed of the Lord.”

II. To inquire what we are to understand by Zion, and to notice the beauty and propriety of the figure.

III. To show you the certainty and the manner of the redeemed's return to Zion—they shall return “with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads.”

IV. To direct your attention to the happiness which they shall there enjoy—“they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

After we have made a few observations on each of these points, we shall conclude with some improvement of the subject.

I. We are to consider the character of the persons here introduced—“the ransomed of the Lord.” This character obviously supposes that, in common with others of the human race, they were involved by sin in a state of moral slavery and misery, from which they were totally unable to extricate themselves. If this truth be not taken for granted, it is impossible to give any rational account of the scheme of redemption by Jesus Christ, for to speak of redeeming persons who are free and happy, is a manifest absurdity. The ransomed of the Lord, therefore, were once the slaves of sin, of Satan, and their own corrupt propensities. He who committeth sin, is the servant and slave of sin, for the service of sin is slavery, and its wages death. In this situation they were the prisoners of divine justice, exposed to all the wretchedness of the basest servitude, and to worse than Egyptian bondage. But shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? Yes, for the Lord pitied them in their miserable condition, and purposed that they should be redeemed. But, although God was willing that sinners of mankind should be redeemed, he resolved that this redemption should be accomplished in a manner consistent with the glory of all his perfections, and the honour of his



law and moral government. The character presented to us in our text, therefore, supposes, that a redeemer has been provided, an adequate ransom paid and accepted for their release. As no rational creature, however, can redeem himself, or give unto God a ransom for his brother, where is this mighty redeemer to be found, and how is this ransom to be provided? The Son of God generously undertook our cause, saying, "Lo, I come; to do thy will I take delight." Let a body, or human nature be prepared for me, that I may have a right to the redemption, and a ransom to pay, and to rescue them from their miserable condition, I will give my life a ransom for them. Accordingly, in the fulness of time, the Son of God appeared in our nature, was made under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. Our sins, with his own consent, were laid upon him, and he bore them in his own body on the tree, for he came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. The eternal Father, as the great Judge of all, testified his acceptance of this ransom, by raising the Redeemer from the dead, setting him down at his right hand, and investing him with power and authority to complete the redemption of his people, by giving eternal life unto as many as he had given him. The ransomed of the Lord, who believe in Christ as their only Redeemer, obtain deliverance from the condemnation of the law, from the dominion of sin, from conformity to the world, and the tyranny of the wicked one, and shall finally be rescued from the power of the grave, and raised to the enjoyment of immortal happiness. Though sin itself continues to exist, and operate within them, and they feel a law in their members warring against the law in their minds, yet sin shall not have the dominion over them, for they are not un-

der the law, but under grace. Their old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin in them may be destroyed, that henceforth they should not serve sin. Though they may be tempted by the adversary of their salvation, he shall not be permitted to rule over them, and God shall bruise him under their feet shortly. Though their bodies at death shall be laid in the grave, and remain for a season in the house appointed for all living, yet being the redeemed property of the Lord, they shall be raised in glory, for Jesus is the resurrection and the life. He will ransom them from the power of the grave. O death, he will be thy plague; grave, he will be thy destruction. As the whole of this work is accomplished by the sufferings and death of the Redeemer, so the ransomed feel a deep sense of obligation to him as their Lord, and ascribe to him the glory due to his name. They are emphatically styled the ransomed of the Lord. No creature could have undertaken and accomplished this arduous work. Angels who excel in strength were unequal to the task. Whether we consider the weakness of the creature, the magnitude of the work itself, or the express declarations of Scripture, we must acknowledge that redemption is of the Lord. Yes, it is the Lord that redeems the souls of his servants, and none perish that trust in him. Christians know that they have been redeemed, not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. With hearts, therefore, warmed with love to the Redeemer, they ascribe unto him the glory of their redemption on earth, and hope to unite with the ransomed in heaven in saying, Rev. v. 9, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast

redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.”

II. We now proceed to inquire what we are to understand by Zion, and to show you the beauty and propriety of the figure. And here it is to be observed, that Zion was the name of a mountain, or rather part of a mountain at Jerusalem, on which the temple of the Lord was built. It is said to have been exceedingly beautiful, not only in its natural appearance, but upon account of the magnificent buildings with which it was adorned. “Beautiful for situation is Mount Zion on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.” The term Zion, in Scripture, has various significations. Sometimes it denotes that part of the mountain upon which the temple was built, the temple itself, or the whole city of Jerusalem; and sometimes the church of God on this earth, or the church triumphant in heaven. In this last acceptation it is used by the Apostle, Heb. xii. 22, “But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and unto an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.” Christians on earth are already connected with this glorious society, and in a little shall return and come to the heavenly Zion in the manner represented in this passage. It is, therefore, we apprehend, to the celestial Zion we must direct our attention, if we would bring out the full meaning of this passage. But if by Zion here we are ultimately to understand the heavenly state, let us now inquire with what propriety heaven may be represented under this emblem.

1st. Here, we observe, that heaven may be called



Zion because *there the glory of God was visibly displayed*. Although God is omnipotent, and fills heaven and earth with his glory, yet we know that he is pleased to manifest different degrees of his glory to different individuals and in different places. But of all the places upon this earth, Zion of old seems to have been the most distinguished. The temple, indeed, was built upon it by divine appointment, to be a sacred receptacle for the divine Majesty, where he might come and dwell in visible glory among his people. Accordingly, we find that the temple was no sooner built by Solomon, and by prayer and costly sacrifice dedicated to the service of Jehovah, than the fire of the Lord came down from heaven, and the glory of the Lord filled the house. There he exhibited the symbols of his gracious presence; for, during the standing of the first temple at least, the shekinah, or cloud of glory, covered the mercy-seat, and Jehovah dwelt between the cherubim, as in the place of his delightful residence. Ps. cxxxii. 13—“For the Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation.” In this respect, then, the earthly Zion becomes a beautiful and significant emblem of the heavenly Jerusalem, of the Zion that is above. There the glory of the Lord fills the house of the Lord, and shines with a splendour which mortal eyes cannot behold. In this world his glory is but obscurely discerned. We see it only as through a glass darkly; but in heaven the glory of the Lord is unveiled, and this glory illuminates the heavenly world—for the Lamb is the light thereof. There he displays his glory—there he dwells among the redeemed in endearing friendship, assuring them of his love, discovering unto them his transcendent excellence, and rendering them completely happy in his fulness and favour; for, having guided them

by his counsel, he afterwards receives them into glory. "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am, to behold my glory."

2d. We observe that heaven may be represented under the emblem of Zion, because there *all the people of God shall at last assemble to serve him in perfect purity and social harmony*. We learn from Scripture that all the males from among the children of Israel were to meet three times in the year, before the Lord at Jerusalem, to celebrate the sacred festivals of their religion. To this command, even when they had lost the power of vital godliness, they were exceedingly attentive; and it must have been an interesting spectacle to behold the chosen tribes travelling from the most distant parts of the country, and meeting in one vast assembly for public worship at Mount Zion. In this respect Zion becomes a beautiful and striking emblem of heaven, the place where all the true Israel of God are collected. Countless multitudes, through much tribulation, have already entered into this habitation; many, we trust, are now upon the way with their faces Zionward, and many more shall arise after we have gone the way of all the earth, and enter upon the path that conducts to glory. All of them shall at last meet in one vast and glorious society, not to remain together for a few days, or months, or years, but to be for ever with one another, and to be for ever with the Lord. Glorious place! blessed society! Do not our hearts exult in the prospect of soon joining this innumerable multitude, and uniting with them in celebrating the praises of redeeming love.

3d. Heaven may be represented under the emblem of the earthly Zion, because *there the praises of God were regu'arly and constantly celebrated*.

“Blessed are they,” says the Psalmist, “that dwell in thy house, for they will be still praising thee.” In the earthly Zion the various services enjoined by the law were not only regularly performed, but the praises of God were daily sung in delightful harmony. Persons were appointed for this purpose, and the psalms or songs composed by inspired writers, were delivered unto the chief musician, in order that they might be sung in the praises of God during the day. Nay, we have reason to believe that the priest and ministers of God who were appointed during night to order the lamps and to perform the service of the sanctuary, would not be silent during their nightly vigils, but would comply with that sacred injunction, Ps. cxxxiv. 1, “Behold, bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord, which by night stand in the house of the Lord. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord.” Was the worship of God performed by day and by night in the earthly sanctuary on Mount Zion? What a lively emblem in this respect does it become of the heavenly Zion! There the praises of God are continually celebrated,—they serve him day and night in his temple, and he who sits upon the throne shall dwell among them.

III. We now proceed to show you the certainty and manner of the redeemed’s return to Zion—they shall return “with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads.”

1st. They may be certain they shall return and come to Zion *because their Redeemer, by his sufferings and death, has procured for them this felicity, and has opened the way to it, which their sins had shut.* By his death, Jesus not only purchased his people, but secured for them every



blessing. He hath redeemed them to God by his own blood, and secured for them the enjoyment of the heavenly inheritance. Is eternal happiness procured for believers by the death of Christ, and shall not the redeemed enter upon the full possession of it? Were they not, it would render the death of the Redeemer inefficacious and unavailing. We may be certain, therefore, that all that Christ has procured for his people is secured unto them, and shall be enjoyed by them as the fruits of his purchase; and this circumstance must enhance their heavenly enjoyments. When they behold all their happiness flowing unto them through the channel of redeeming blood, how will it inflame their love, and with what joy and transport will they sing and say, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation!"

2d. The redeemed may also be certain that they shall return and come unto the heavenly Zion, because *the Redeemer has gone before them to take possession of it in their name and nature*. Christians derive solid comfort from every view they take of the Saviour's character and work, and from every step he takes in accomplishing their redemption. They not only derive consolation from his birth and life, his death and resurrection, but likewise from his glorious entrance into the heavenly world as their head and representative. The ascension of Christ becomes exceedingly interesting unto real Christians, because he did not ascend as a private individual, but as a public person to take possession of heaven as the forerunner of his people. Hence the Apostle, when speaking on this subject,

says, Heb. vi. 20, "Whether the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus." As the Redeemer by his death opened the way to heaven, so he has gone before to secure admission to all his people, and to prepare mansions of glory for them in his Father's house. Has he gone to prepare these mansions, and shall they after all remain empty? Is the head in heaven, and shall the members be excluded? Is the master there, and shall not the servants accompany him, especially when he assures us "that where he is there shall his servants be?" No; his return to Zion after he had finished his work is the pledge of the return of all his people, after they have fought the good fight of faith, and finished the work which is assigned them to do. Nay, so intimate is the connexion which subsists between Christ and all true Christians, that the redeemed are represented in Scripture as being in some sense in heaven already. Remarkable to this purpose are the words of Paul, Eph. ii. 4—6, "But God, who is rich in mercy, hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Christians are risen with Christ, and have their citizenship already in heaven.

3d. The redeemed may be certain they shall return and come to Zion, because *in the gift of the Spirit which they all receive they have the earnest of their heavenly inheritance.* The possession of the Spirit of Christ with his various graces is essential to the character of every Christian, for if any one have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his. But the Spirit is given as an earnest or part of the heavenly happiness, Eph. i. 14, "which is the earnest of our inheritance;" and therefore from the present possession of this part, they may certainly expect the future enjoyment of

the whole, for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. Their right to heaven flows originally from the gift of God, but the manner in which they come to be entitled to it is by their vital connexion with Jesus Christ; if children, then heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ; and the Spirit is sent into their hearts, sealing their adoption, and consequently sealing them to the day of redemption.

4th. We observe that the ransomed of the Lord may be certain they shall return and come to Zion, because *the Redeemer has promised to be with them, to lead them in the right way*—to remove every obstruction, to defend them from all their enemies, and to keep them by his power through faith unto salvation. “All my sheep are in my hand, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.” The redeemed in this world are sometimes ignorant of the way in which they ought to walk. They meet with much opposition, and are constantly surrounded with enemies, whom of themselves they are unable to vanquish and subdue. Were they left to their own guidance and strength, they might despair of arriving at the heavenly Zion, and say, “we shall one day fall by the hand of some of our enemies;” but that gracious Redeemer who has ransomed them by his blood has promised to accompany them in their passage through this wilderness, to guide them by his wisdom, to guard them by his power, to supply their wants, to strengthen them in their weakness, to cheer them in the season of sorrow, and to make them more than conquerors through his all-sufficient grace. Yes; he who led ancient Israel through the wilderness, going before them in a pillar of cloud to shade them by day, and in a pillar of fire to protect them by night, is in a no less



real though invisible manner with all his redeemed, still going with them as the Captain of their salvation, and preserving them to his kingdom and glory.

But if it be thus absolutely certain that the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion, in what manner, it may be asked, shall they return? This naturally leads us to the second part of the inquiry; namely, in what manner the redeemed shall return to Zion. They shall return "with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads."

1st. The redeemed shall return to Zion *with a song of victory and triumph*. While the redeemed remain in this world, they are engaged in a constant conflict with the enemies of their salvation. They carry on this warfare with various success. Sometimes they conquer, sometimes they are vanquished, and victory hangs in doubtful scale. The power of their enemies, however, is gradually subdued, and fighting under the banner of the Captain of their salvation, victory shall at last declare in their favour. Now, as it is usual when victory is obtained to raise a shout of exultation, so the ransomed of the Lord shall return after all their victories unto the heavenly Zion, with a song of triumph, claiming no merit to themselves, but ascribing all the glory to the power, the skill, and grace of their illustrious and invincible leader, whose arm hath gotten him the victory, and whose grace deserves all the praise.

2d. The redeemed shall also return to Zion with *a song of complete deliverance*. This is an additional idea of vast importance, for though an army may obtain a victory and a temporary triumph, yet their enemies may collect their broken forces, and having received fresh reinforcements, may again attack and finally overcome them; but this shall

not be the case with the ransomed of the Lord, for their enemies shall not only be thrust out, but destroyed. This truth may be illustrated by what befel the Egyptians at the Red Sea. On their pursuing Israel through the opening which Jehovah had made for their escape, the Lord caused the waters to overwhelm them, and they sunk as lead in the mighty deep, to rise no more. Israel, we are told, on the opposite shore sang the sublime song of deliverance, recorded in the 15th chapter of Exodus—"We will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." With what higher transports shall the ransomed of the Lord sing a song of complete deliverance when all their enemies shall be destroyed, and the day of their perfect redemption dawn!

3d. The redeemed of the Lord shall return to Zion with a *song that shall be new and everlasting*. We read in the book of the Revelation, that the redeemed sing a new song before the throne. While in this world, they often called upon themselves, and invited other saints to sing with them a new song of praise, on account of some remarkable deliverance with which they had been favoured. From the languor of their affections, however, or from personal distress or public calamities, they were not always able so to praise their God, and therefore sometimes said, "how shall we sing the Lord's song in this foreign land?" But when they return to Zion, every complaint of this kind shall be removed, and they shall not only have a new subject of praise, complete redemption, but they shall always sing with new animation. They shall ever be rising higher in their notes of praise, and yet never reach the highest note in the scale of celestial music; for their song shall not only be new, but

eternal. While on earth, their seasons of praise suffered frequent interruptions; night succeeded to shorten their days of praise, and their feeble frames required refreshment and repose; but in heaven their hearts shall be fixed and attuned, their bodies, being spiritual and vigorous, shall never be weary, and obtaining new discoveries of the wonders of redeeming love, no night shall cut short their days of praise, and their song shall be new and everlasting.

IV. Let us now proceed in the last place to direct your attention to the happiness the redeemed shall enjoy on their return to Zion. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

1st. Inverting the order of our text, we observe, that *sorrow and sighing shall flee away*. In this world we are in a sinful, and therefore in a suffering condition; and to endure our afflictions with suitable dispositions, is an important branch of christian duty; but in the celestial Zion sorrow and sighing shall be unknown. Here we feel sorrow on account of bodily pain or domestic distress—we sigh over the calamities of life—over poverty and persecution—the temptations of the adversary, and the hidings of our Father's countenance—we suffer in the afflictions of our friends, and the best feelings of our nature become inlets of misery. We mourn especially over the existence and operation of sin in our hearts and lives, and we are deeply affected when we contemplate and behold around us the terrors and triumphs of death. But these sorrows are only of a temporary nature, and, in regard to true Christians, confined to this valley of tears. When they return to Zion, they shall either be forgotten, or, if remembered, shall



tend to heighten the happiness they shall there enjoy. As the darkness of the night is dispelled by the light of the rising sun, so the darkness of sorrow and the gloom of grief shall flee away before the dawn of the day of glory, and the rising of that sun which shall never set. There God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away, and all things made new.

2d. But this is not all: the ransomed of the Lord, upon their return to Zion, shall not only be free from sorrow and sighing, but they shall *obtain joy and gladness*. In this world the redeemed were no strangers to spiritual joy and holy gladness, but their joy was never full and unmingled: in heaven, however, it shall be a fulness of joy and unmixed delight—in that blessed world there shall be nothing but joy. The sources of sorrow shall be for ever shut, and the spring of pure and perpetual joy shall be opened. This joy shall arise from the enlargement of their faculties, and a vast addition being made to their intellectual knowledge. Here their knowledge is attended with much labour in the acquisition—is limited in its nature, and is often blended with error, or accompanied with sorrow; but in heaven their knowledge shall be easily attained—it shall be acquired as by intuition—it shall be extensive in its range, satisfying in its discoveries, and accompanied with the highest joy and greatest delight. What delightful views shall they obtain of the nature and perfections of God—of his works and ways—of the mysteries of providence, and the wonders of redemption, leading them to exclaim, “Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true

art thou in all thy ways : who would not fear and glorify thy name ? for thou only art holy." This joy will arise from perfect purity, or being completely formed into a resemblance of the divine image. Holiness, indeed, commenced in their hearts in this world, and advanced with their progress in sanctification ; but it was still imperfect, and their joy, therefore, was not full. But in heaven their purity shall be spotless—they shall see Christ as he is ; and this perfect holiness shall be a source of the purest and most sublime delight. It shall diffuse through their whole souls a pleasure, of which we can at present form no adequate conception. This joy shall arise from a course of the most pleasing and delightful service. Heaven is not the land of indolence and inactivity. Man was made for action, and in a series of active services his happiness must consist. The people of God in heaven serve him and see his face. There they shall continually behold his glory, celebrate his praise, and with the greatest alacrity execute his pleasure. This joy will be greatly enhanced from its social nature, for it shall be enjoyed in the most pleasing, dignified, and improving society. As we are social creatures, much of our happiness even in this world arises from social intercourse—our joys in heaven shall not be solitary, but social joys. There we shall come to God, the great Judge of all, the fountain of excellence and standard of all perfection—to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, who hath ransomed us by his blood, and without whom there could be no hope nor heaven for sinners of the human race. There we shall be associated with an innumerable company of angels, those pure benevolent spirits who performed to us many important services on this earth ; and there we shall join the general assembly and church of

the first-born, congregated in the celestial world—the patriarchs and prophets, the apostles and primitive martyrs—all the great and good who have lived, who now exist, or who shall appear in this world before the end of time—all of one heart and mind, knit together in bonds of pure affection, dwelling in perfect harmony, and serving God with one spirit in his temple. What joy must arise from mingling with this blessed society, when the joy of every individual shall be the joy of the whole! This joy will arise from perfect satisfaction in the divine presence and fulness. We never experience complete satisfaction in this world, for it is not suited to our nature, and, therefore, cannot impart satisfaction to our hearts. Its good things, however, impose upon our imaginations, and we are so foolish as to expect satisfying and lasting delight from the objects which are vanity in their nature, and vexation in their enjoyment. But the complete satisfaction which we seek for in vain in this world, the redeemed shall enjoy when they enter Zion; for they shall be satisfied, when they awake, with the Redeemer's likeness. They shall enjoy so much that no void shall be left, no expectation disappointed, for they shall be filled with all the fulness of God. If they feel, as they must, a desire after its continuance, even this desire shall be gratified; for we remark that the joy of which the redeemed shall be put in possession shall be eternal—they shall return with everlasting joy upon their heads. The joys of this world are temporary and transient; they are like to the crackling of thorns; they blaze for a little, but soon expire in dust and darkness. But the joys of the heavenly Zion are as permanent as they are pure; for the redeemed shall obtain salvation with eternal glory. Were the smallest suspicion to enter into the minds



of the redeemed that their felicity at some distant period might come to a termination, the thought would mar their happiness, and damp their joy. But such an idea can never arise in their minds, for they know that it shall be eternal. When millions of ages have passed away, this joy shall only be beginning ; and endless ages shall roll on, only to increase their happiness and heighten their joy—a joy durable as their immortal souls, and eternal as the throne of God, from whence it proceeds.

1st. From what has been said, you may inquire whether or not you are the ransomed of the Lord. This inquiry is of the utmost importance, and ought to be conducted with much seriousness and solemnity. Have you been convinced of your wretched condition as guilty sinners, of your spiritual bondage as the slaves of sin, and of your total inability to extricate yourselves from your perilous situation? Have you been led earnestly to desire deliverance through the great Redeemer? Have you obtained spiritual discoveries of the glory and excellence of the Redeemer, and of the suitableness of the redemption which he has purchased for sinners of our fallen race? Have you cordially embraced Christ as your Redeemer, and in consequence of this experienced some degree of peace and liberty? Is the power of sin in some measure subdued, and being made free from its dominion, have you become the servants of righteousness, and are you walking in newness and holiness of life? Do you feel a sense of deep obligation to your divine Redeemer for accomplishing your redemption? and, considering yourselves as his redeemed property, are you glorifying him in your bodies and spirits, which are his? Does the love of Christ constrain you no longer to live to

yourselves, but unto Him who died for you and rose again? Do you ascribe the undivided glory of your redemption to Jesus Christ, and are you longing for the day of your complete deliverance, when, free from sin, and raised in glory, you shall see him as he is, and ascribe your complete redemption to God and the Lamb for ever and ever? If you can answer these questions in the affirmative, you have reason to conclude that you are the ransomed of the Lord, and that the prediction in this passage shall be fully accomplished in your blessed experience: for he who has begun this good work will carry it on till the day of Jesus Christ.

2d. See what suitable consolation this subject affords unto the ransomed of the Lord under all the sorrows and sufferings of life. The Redeemer has left this world, but he has not left his people comfortless in it, but has amply provided for their comfort and support. In his person and sacrifice, in his fulness and grace, in his precious promises, and the animating prospects he sets before his people, he is the consolation of Israel, and a present help to them in every time of trouble. In the world, indeed, they shall have tribulation; but in him they have peace. Now they may be sorrowful; but their sorrows are short and transitory, and shall be turned into joy. Now they may mourn over remaining depravity; but their old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin may be destroyed. Now they may be called to endure many hardships, to suffer many privations, and to combat numerous enemies; but all their trials shall work together for their good: their enemies shall be vanquished, and they shall be blessed with a complete victory and eternal triumph. Though in this world, like their Redeemer, they may be called to bear the cross, the crown of glory is pre-

pared for them, and shall be conferred on them, and this shall more than compensate for all their momentary sufferings. How delightful and transporting is it to anticipate the period when the redeemed of the Lord shall meet in the heavenly Zion—when every eye shall be fixed on the glorious Redeemer, and every tongue shall utter his praise! Beholding the Redeemer who washed them from their sins in his blood, clothed them in his righteousness, and sanctified them by his Spirit, and who, through the whole of their pilgrimage, proved their steadfast friend, their infallible guide and almighty guardian, and who at last conducted them in safety to the heavenly inheritance, and placed them before his throne, with humility and admiring gratitude shall they cast their crowns before the throne, saying, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive all glory and honour; for he has redeemed us unto God by his own blood, and we shall reign with him for ever and ever.”

3d. You may learn from what has been advanced the grounds which the redeemed of the Lord have for confidence in him, and for praising his name from day to day as the God of their salvation. The Lord has promised that his ransomed people shall return and come to Zion, and he is faithful who has promised, and they may safely rely on his fidelity. They should trust in the Lord, therefore, for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength. His redeemed people he hath formed for himself: they shall show forth all his praise. As the Lord hath redeemed Israel, therefore “sing, O heavens; for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein.” Let all the redeemed in heaven, or upon earth, of every station, or rank, or character, unite in one



grateful, joyful song of thanksgiving and of praise to their redeeming Lord. "O give thanks unto the Lord ; for he is good : his mercy endureth for ever. Bless the Lord, O our souls, and all that is within us bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O our souls, and forget not all his benefits : who forgiveth all our iniquities ; who healeth all our diseases ; who redeemeth our life from destruction, and crowneth us with loving-kindness and tender mercies." By thus frequently engaging in the pleasing exercise of praise and thankfulness to God for his redeeming mercy upon earth, we shall be trained up for the delightful employment of eternal praise in heaven, and for uniting with all the redeemed before the throne in saying, "Thou art worthy to open the book ; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

Lastly. From this subject you may perceive the degraded and miserable condition of those who are not the ransomed of the Lord. They are the slaves of sin and Satan, the victims of divine justice, and the heirs of condemnation. They feel that they are unhappy in this world, and they fear that they shall be eternally miserable in the world to come. Their fears are not visionary, for while they despise the Redeemer, and redemption through his blood, their future destruction is inevitable. Let us reverse the language of the text, and hear in what appalling terms it speaks to them. You are not redeemed by the Lord, and therefore you shall not return and come to Zion, but remain in the basest and most wretched bondage. But this is not all. You shall not only lose the happiness of heaven, you shall suffer the misery of hell ; your bodies at death shall be consigned to the grave as a prison, while your spirits shall be sent to be tor-

mented with other condemned spirits in the separate state, and after the resurrection and righteous judgment, you shall go away in your souls and bodies to the region of endless misery, where you shall be punished with everlasting destruction, experiencing bitter sorrow, keen remorse, and overwhelming despair. Your present situation is deplorable, but, blessed be God! it is not yet desperate. In the mercy of God, the merits of the Redeemer, and the calls of the gospel, there is still hope even for such as you, and with setting this hope before you, and calling upon you instantly to lay hold upon it that you may live, we shall close this discourse. Zech. ix. 12—"Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even today do I declare that I will render double unto you."

## SERMON XVII.

### THE COVENANT OF GOD EVERLASTING, ORDERED WELL IN ALL THINGS, AND SURE.

2 SAM. xxiii. 5.

“ Although my house be not so with God ; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure : for this is all my salvation, and all my desire.”

THE last words of great and distinguished personages are heard with attention, and remembered with pleasure. They make a deep impression on the mind, and are seldom forgotten. The words of our reading merit our attention upon several accounts. They are the last words of a great and good man—of a pious prince and inspired prophet ; and they express a sentiment fraught with the most important instruction and solid comfort unto every Christian. They are introduced with a sublime and suitable preface, in which we have, not only the character of the inspired speaker, but likewise a pleasing description of the qualities of a good prince, and of the happiness which will be enjoyed under his administration. A ruler must be possessed of the amiable qualities of piety and justice, and his influence over his subjects will be benign and refreshing, as that of the morning sun when it arises unclouded upon the earth, or of the refreshing rain upon the tender grass. 2 Sam. 3, 4—“ The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds ; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.” In the



near prospect of his dissolution David takes a serious review of his past life and conduct, and instead of finding such a perfect righteousness as could give him hope of appearing before God with confidence, or of being justified upon account of it in his sight, he beholds many instances of want of conformity unto the divine law. The situation of his family, and the conduct which some of his children had observed, instead of affording him comfort, fills his heart with sorrow. Under such an affecting view of personal and domestic guilt, the soul of this good man at this solemn hour would have been overwhelmed, had he not been relieved by faith's view of the grace and mercy of the covenant which the Lord had established with him. This, however, dispels his fears and confirms his hope, and imparts a sacred strength which affliction could not shake, or death destroy. Assured of his personal interest in this covenant, he rises superior to every fear, he looks the last enemy in the face without dismay, and triumphing over him, exclaims, "Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire." In farther discoursing from these words, it is humbly proposed, in dependence upon divine grace,

I. To show you what we are to understand by a covenant, and with whom the one in the text was made.

II. To illustrate the leading properties of this covenant.

III. To show you the satisfaction and comfort which believers derive from it in every circumstance and situation of life—it is all their salvation, and all their desire.

We shall then conclude with some practical improvement.

I. We are to show you what we understand by a covenant, and with whom the one in the text was made. A covenant is a mutual agreement between two or more parties, wherein they bind themselves unto each other upon certain terms. These terms or conditions form the difference between a covenant and an absolute promise ; for in all covenants there must be contracting parties and mutual engagements. By the covenant in the text we are not to understand the covenant of royalty which was established with David, and by which the kingdom was secured unto his family till the coming of Messiah, for he expressly says his house was not so with God : neither are we to understand by it the covenant of works, which was broken by our great progenitor, and which worketh wrath ; but we are evidently to understand by it the covenant of grace, which was originally established with Christ Jesus, and in him with all his people. This is emphatically styled the covenant of grace, because it originated in the free favour and sovereign goodness of God ; and sometimes the new covenant, because, although it was laid in the councils of peace before the foundation of the world, it was revealed after the first was broken, and shall never be succeeded by another. It must be evident to every one who reads the word of God with candour and attention, that the scheme of our salvation was laid in the councils of heaven before it was executed ; and that, in the way of covenant transaction, it was settled between the Father and the Son as the head and representative of his people. Although the love of all the persons in the Trinity is essentially and eter-

nally the same, yet the first overture of mercy is represented in Scripture as made by the Eternal Father unto the Son. “God so loved the world that he *gave* his only-begotten and well-beloved Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life.” He it was who projected the grand design—who proposed unto the Son, that, upon his assuming human nature, fulfilling all righteousness, and giving himself a sacrifice for sin, he should see his seed, that the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hands, that he should be invested with mediatorial power and authority, and finally raised to inconceivable glory and honour. To this proposal the Son with infinite pleasure accedes, saying, “Lo, I come; to do thy will, O my God, I take delight.” That such an agreement took place between the Father and Son, though the manner in which it was concluded cannot be fully understood or explained by us, is evident from many passages in Sacred Scripture. Prov. viii. 23—“I was set up from everlasting.” Ps. lxxxix. 3, 4—“I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations.” As this is applied unto Christ, Heb. i. 8, it puts the matter beyond all doubt. “But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.” Still more expressly the prophet introduces the Father as declaring, Is. xlii. 6, “I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people.” Hence Christ is said, 1 Pet. i. 20, to be “fore-ordained before the foundation of the world,” and eternal life is said to be promised, and grace given unto Christians in Christ before the



world was. Tit. i. 2—"In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began. 2 Tim. i. 9—"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." All the promises were originally made unto him, and in him they are confirmed unto his people. This is evident from Gal. iii. 16, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." From these passages, compared and examined with attention, it is evident that the covenant was originally made with Christ, and in him with all his people. Here, however, it may be inquired, since this covenant was originally made with Christ as the federal head of his people, and its condition fulfilled by him in the fulness of time, how come believers to have personal interest in it in time, so that each of them can say upon solid grounds, he hath made with me an everlasting covenant. We answer, they come to have actual interest in it by faith. Christ is given for a covenant of the people, and his grace exhibited, is preached unto sinners in general in the gospel. The Lord is therein saying, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." When the sinner, therefore, by the word and Spirit is convinced of sin; when he is enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, and of the nature and constitution of this covenant; when he is made willing in a day of divine power to approve of it in all its

parts, to accept of the grace which it exhibits, and to devote himself unto the Lord, then he comes to have actual and personal interest in it, and in all the blessings which it secures. That this is the way in which the believer comes to be interested in this covenant, is abundantly evident from that memorable passage in Is. lvi. 4—“ But unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and take hold of my covenant; even unto them will I give in mine house, and within my walls, a place and a name better than of sons and daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.” In this manner, believers join themselves unto the Lord in a perpetual covenant. They do not make a new covenant with God, promising repentance and sincere obedience as its condition on their part. They accept of the covenant ratified in Christ Jesus, they embrace its promises, they approve of its articles, they subscribe its constitution, discipline, and laws, they rest upon its precious and peace-speaking blood; and satisfied that it is equally calculated to display the glory of God, and secure the salvation of believing sinners, with joy and satisfaction they declare that it is all their salvation, and all their desire.

II. But this brings us to the second thing proposed, which was to illustrate the leading properties of this covenant.

1st, And here, inverting a little the order of the text, we observe, in the first place, that it is *ordered in all things*. When we enter into agreements of a public and complex nature, where different interests are to be consulted, and various occurrences provided for, although they may be well ordered in some particulars, they are seldom properly adjusted in every point. Such is the weakness and imperfection of human nature, and so little can our limited capacities take in or foresee,

that in transactions of this nature, men afterwards often discern their imperfections and defects, and see reason for correcting and amending them. This, however, is not the case with the covenant of grace; for it is the peculiar property of this covenant, that it is well ordered in all things, and being ordered with infinite wisdom, none of the parties have reason to complain. Here there is nothing superfluous, nothing defective, nothing which could be added without being redundant, or taken away without marring the beauty, and impairing the perfection of the whole. In every respect it is well ordered, especially with a view to display the glory of God, and to secure the salvation of the believing sinner, which were the ultimate ends for which it was established. In this covenant all the perfections of the divine nature are displayed in harmonious lustre. Herein the infinite wisdom and boundless goodness, the unspotted holiness and inviolable truth, the tender mercy and inflexible justice of God, shine forth with united splendour. Herein the justice and mercy of God, which seemed to oppose or limit one another in their exercise, shine more bright in union than they could have done apart; for, as the Psalmist observes, Ps. lxxxv. 10, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Herein grace is exalted, and the pride of man abased—the honour of the divine law supported, and obedience to it secured—sin is punished, and the sinner saved—God appears great and yet gracious, the just God and the Saviour. When we consider this wise contrivance and wonderful constitution, can we help exclaiming with the Apostle, Rom. xi. 33, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" This



covenant is also well ordered in all things for securing the peace, the holiness, and happiness of all who by faith take hold of it. Herein is provision made for every want, and a promise of assistance for every duty. Are they dead in trespasses and sins, and sitting in the region and shadow of death? Herein is provision for their being quickened and enlightened; for Christ the covenant of the people is given to open blind eyes, to bring forth the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house. Are they not only unworthy of the divine favour, but unwilling to receive it? Is there a remaining principle of enmity in their hearts, and are they insufficient of themselves to think a good thought, or to perform any acceptable service? Herein is provision for removing these, for making them willing in a day of divine power, for slaying the enmity of their hearts, and for furnishing them for every good word and work. There is not a duty to which a believer is called, but there is some corresponding promise of assistance in this well ordered covenant. Thus, for instance, is he commanded to make unto himself a new heart? Then it is promised, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." Is he commanded to love the Lord with all his heart? Then it is promised, Deut. xxx. 6, "I will circumcise your heart to love me, saith the Lord." Is he commanded to fear the Lord his God? Then it is promised, Jer. xxxii. 39, "I will give them one heart, that they may fear me for ever." Is he enjoined to repent of his sins, and to believe the gospel? Then he is assured that Christ is exalted to give repentance, and that faith is the gift of God. Is he commanded as an evidence of his faith and repentance to obey the laws of God? Then it is pro-

mised, Ezek. xxxvi. 27, "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." Is he commanded to persevere in duty, and not to depart from the Lord his God? Then it is promised, Jer. xxxii. 40, "I will put my fear into their hearts, and they shall not depart from me." How well ordered then is this covenant in all things, when to every duty there is a corresponding promise to encourage and strengthen Christians to the performance of it; for these promises, instead of rendering the believer careless and negligent, powerfully excite him to diligence and activity. He works out the work of his salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that it is God who worketh in him both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

2d. Another leading property of this covenant is that it *is sure and steadfast*. All covenants and engagements among men are, from the weakness and wickedness of mankind, in some measure precarious and uncertain. Unforeseen and insurmountable difficulties may arise, which may put it out of their power to perform their engagements; or being mutable, the parties may prove perfidious, and not fulfil the part which they have in their power. Thus, among men of the highest rank, who are impotent or ignorant, who are foolish or treacherous, breach of promise, and the violation of the most solemn public engagements, are not unfrequently experienced, involving nations in the horrors of war and devastation. Nothing of this nature, however, without the greatest impiety, can be supposed to take place in this covenant, or with God and our Saviour who is the surety of it. Here there can be no room for weakness, for God is almighty; no possibility of mistake, for he is omniscient; and no place for change, for he is im-

mutable. Although the simple promise of God, who cannot lie, is sufficient security for the believer to rest upon, yet in condescension to our weakness, and the more abundantly to show its stability, he has been graciously pleased to superadd his oath, Heb. vi. 17, 18, "For God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." But here it may be said, although this covenant is absolutely sure upon God's part, yet how does it appear that it is equally steadfast on that of the believer? We answer, because Christ Jesus is the surety of it. Heb. vii. 22—"By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament." He fulfilled the condition required of him, and he is now surety for his servants for good. All fulness is treasured up in him as the living head of his people, and out of this they shall receive, and grace for grace. Were this a covenant of works like the first, made with weak and fallen man—did its stability depend upon the Christian's steadfastness, like the first, it would be broken and disannulled; but, as the Apostle observes, and the observation is replete with comfort to every believer, Rom. iv. 16, that this covenant is by faith, "to the end that it might be sure unto all the seed." All grace is in Christ Jesus, and this grace shall be made sufficient for his people. They are all in his hands, and intimately connected with him, and none shall ever pluck them out of them, or be able to break that indissoluble bond by which they are united to him; because he lives they shall live also. Moreover, Christ by his death has ratified and confirmed this covenant, he has given



it the form of a testamentary deed, and now he ever lives, not only to make intercession for his people, but to bestow upon them those invaluable blessings which he died to purchase, and is exalted to confer. Thus the covenant is possessed of the utmost certainty and stability. It cannot be broken or superseded, for as soon may the course of nature be obstructed by human power, or the seasons arrested as they revolve, as this covenant may be broken or disannulled. Jer. xxxiii. 20, 21—“If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season; then may also my covenant be broken.” As the first is impossible, so also is the last. The promises of this covenant are true, its mercies are sure mercies, and God will keep covenant and mercy for his servants for ever.

3d. This naturally leads us to remark, in the third and last place, upon this branch of the subject, that another leading property of this covenant is, that *it is everlasting*. Every agreement in this world must have some period when it commenced, and from which it is dated, and it will have a period when it must expire. However long it may continue, it must be commensurate with time—with time it must wax old, and with time be forgotten. But when the everlasting Father enters into covenant with his own Son, or when the believer actually takes hold of this covenant by faith, and is thus united to Jesus Christ, this agreement and union shall stand fast for ever. The foundations of this covenant are the love and purpose of God, the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ; and as these are unchangeable, they shall continue to support it for ever and ever. Built on these immovable pillars, it must be permanent and eter-

nal. Its days shall be as the days of heaven, and its duration shall run parallel with eternity. Mercy in this covenant shall be built for ever, and the faithfulness of God in it shall endure to all generations. 'This mercy is from everlasting to everlasting—it shall follow the believer through this weary wilderness, and enter with him into the heavenly Canaan. "I have loved you," says the Lord unto his people, "with an everlasting love, and, therefore, with loving-kindness have I drawn you." How deplorable would the situation of Christians in the covenant be if the love and purpose of God towards them were as variable as their frame of mind; if upon every involuntary failing, or lamented transgression, this covenant was to be broken, or his sovereign love removed! It is true, upon account of these transgressions, Christians may receive severe chastisements; but the covenant of their peace shall not be removed, the love of their Father shall not cease, nor shall the heavenly inheritance be taken from them. As this is a truth frequently and strongly asserted in Sacred Scripture, we cannot better illustrate and confirm it than in the language of Scripture itself. Ps. lxxxix. 30—"If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips." Is. liv. 10—"The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." Is. lv. 3—"Incline your

ear, and come unto me : hear, and your soul shall live ; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Ezek. xvi. 60, 62—" Nevertheless, I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant. And I will establish my covenant with thee ; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord." Thus, the Lord hath marked it with the seal of his power and truth,—he hath commanded it for ever, and for ever it shall endure. This is the source of unspeakable comfort unto every Christian in this passing and perishing estate. While every other covenant and connection fails, this stands firm and permanent. The faith of this enables him, as Paul in his epistle to the Rom. viii. 38, 39, to declare, " For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

III. This brings us forward to the third and last thing proposed, namely, to show you the satisfaction and comfort which believers derive from it in every circumstance and situation in life.

1st. Believers derive satisfaction from this covenant, because herein they behold a method by which, in consistency with the divine perfections, and the honour of the divine law and government, *they may be delivered from the guilt and punishment of sin.* A sense of guilt is natural to the mind of man. Conscious of transgression, we feel a dread of the divine displeasure, and are sensible we have exposed ourselves to the righteous condemnation of the great Judge of all. Although



all the powers and faculties of our minds are by sin impaired, yet conscience, perhaps, is the least corrupted of them all ; for, fallen as we are, sin at first can no more be committed without a sense of guilt, than natural evil can be endured without a sense of pain. As pain follows any injury that is done unto the body, so, remorse or a sense of guilt necessarily attends the commission of iniquity. It is true, indeed, although all men are sinners, and are sensible that they are guilty, yet many of them, especially after they have entered upon a course of iniquity, are very little affected with a sense of guilt. They endeavour to stifle their convictions, and to drown the voice of an accusing conscience in the noise and pleasures, the amusements or business of life : or, if their convictions continue, they study to blunt their edge, and to say peace unto themselves, by relying upon the general mercy of God : or, like the Jews of old, by the external observance of the law, instead of the sacrifice of Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. But although these refuges may satisfy for a season the superficial and secure, they will not be able to afford relief unto the truly awakened soul. Sin, it sees, is the violating of the divine law, the object of the divine displeasure, and necessarily subjects the sinner unto punishment. Although repentance and contrition become every sinner, yet these can neither make atonement for past offences, nor can they insure future obedience. Their efficacy, then, is not to be trusted, nor, although we could perform them in the most perfect manner, could we be assured that they would procure our pardon, or purchase our deliverance. Sorrow and repentance in this world do not deliver the criminal from punishment, nor prevent the natural consequences

of his transgressions, and we have no assurance from nature that they will do so in the world to come. The truth is, that it seems to be a natural and almost universal sentiment of the guilty mind, that some other atonement better than we can offer must be made for sin before the justice of God can be satisfied, or the purity of his holiness reconciled unto the returning sinner. The inquiry of the guilty soul is, "Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord; and what shall I do to be saved?" This is a question to which this covenant, as revealed in the gospel, can alone give a satisfactory answer. Accordingly, the believer who has taken hold of this covenant, has had a strong conviction not only of his lost estate by nature, but likewise of his personal guilt. He has seen himself to be the chief of sinners, and has been alarmed with the wrath to come. Under the influence of his natural blindness, perhaps he has tried several expedients to procure relief. He may have gone through many dry places seeking rest, but finding none. At last his eyes have been directed to behold the fountain opened by Christ for sin and for uncleanness. After he has spent all his substance upon physicians of no value, he has been led to the balm in Gilead, and to the mighty physician there. Beholding Christ as an atoning sacrifice by faith, he has come unto him, and found rest unto his guilty soul. How soothing and satisfying unto his heart, trembling under a sense of conscious guilt, were these reviving words—"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Therefore, "if any man sin, we have an ad-

vocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins." In the obedience and expiatory sacrifice of the Son of God, the believer sees the guilt of sin removed; he sees that he has redemption through his blood; the forgiveness of his sins according to the riches of his grace. While he hopes, therefore, to enjoy the blessings, he rests upon the blood of the covenant, and finds it refreshing and cleansing unto his guilty soul. While this blood pacifies, it purifies, and introduces a serenity and satisfaction to which he was formerly a stranger; for, as the Apostle observes, "If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God?" This is the blood of sprinkling, and the blood of the covenant, which, applied by the Spirit, speaks peace unto the guilty soul, and heals the broken heart. The believer, therefore, beholding it, says concerning this covenant, that it is all his salvation, and all his desire.

2d. The believer derives satisfaction from this covenant in every circumstance and situation of life, because he is thereby *assured of gradual deliverance from the power of sin, of progressive sanctification, and at last of perfect holiness.* By sin we not only become guilty; we are also polluted and impure. While sin weakens, it defiles the soul, and renders it incapable of the enjoyment of God. The entrance of sin has perverted the order of our faculties, weakened their native vigour, and stained their original purity. Being shapen in sin, our minds and consciences are defiled, our affections are carnal and earthly; so that



things temporal and trifling are chosen and preferred to those which are permanent and eternal. This depravity has been universally felt, and various and unavailing have been the methods which human wisdom has devised in order to remove it. The stain of sin, however, is too deep, and its pollution too inveterate and universal, to be removed by any human application. This may palliate, but it can never remove the disorder. The fact is, that sinners must not only be reformed, but regenerated, before they can see the kingdom of heaven. They must be created anew in Christ Jesus; they must be renewed in the spirit of their minds; new principles must be implanted, and desires felt and discovered, before they can be qualified to see God, or to share in the happiness which flows from his fellowship and favour. Now, in this covenant there is provision made for this renovation of nature: holiness is one of its most precious blessings, for Christ is made of God unto them sanctification. While by his blood the guilt of sin is removed from the conscience, by his grace and spirit sanctification is begun in the heart. Light succeeds to darkness, and purity to pollution in the soul. But although the principles of the divine life are implanted, and the seeds of holiness sown in the heart, yet, while Christians are on this side the grave, they will feel a law in their members warring against the law of their minds, and threatening to bring them again into captivity to the law of sin and death. The Canaanites are not expelled all at once. They remain as thorns in their sides, and are the occasion of much distress and danger. Though believers have felt the renovating influence of divine grace, yet they feel they are only in part renewed: the sin is deprived of its tyrannical sway—it is not entirely

subdued—it is ever ready to collect its remaining forces, and to raise rebellion against the powers of grace in the soul. The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these being contrary the one to the other, they cannot do the things that they would. This makes them often sigh in sadness, saying, “O wretched men that we are, who shall deliver us from this body of death?” As sin, however, is dethroned in their hearts, it shall not obtain dominion over them; on the contrary, its power shall be gradually weakened, and at last it shall be utterly destroyed. Like the house of Saul in the kingdom of Israel, it shall grow weaker and weaker, and shall finally become extinct; for their old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin may be destroyed. For this they have the greatest security and the best provision, in the ordered and everlasting covenant. They are assured that he who has begun will carry on and perfect the good work in their souls, and that for this purpose he will bless unto them all the dispensations of his providence, and ordinances of his institution. By these shall their iniquities be purged, their affections purified, and they shall be more prepared for heaven and glory. “I will subdue your iniquities, I will love you freely.” In a little, sin with all their enemies shall be thrust out and destroyed, and their souls shall join the spirits of the just on high. Then sin and sorrow shall be extinguished in their hearts, and perfect holiness, as a beautiful robe, shall adorn their natures. Now does the believer see all this secured unto him in this covenant, and is it any wonder he says, concerning it, that it is all his salvation and all his desire.

3d, and lastly. This covenant affords satisfaction and comfort to every believer, in as much as

he has therein the surest ground of *hope for the enjoyment of God in the world to come*. As man was originally formed after the image, so he was happy in the enjoyment of God; and although this image is defaced, and he is banished the terrestrial paradise, yet he is still desirous of happiness, and wishes to re-enter the abodes of bliss. Destined for eternity, he wishes to avoid everlasting misery, and to obtain eternal happiness. It is true, although all men are desirous of happiness, few seek it in the path where it is alone to be found; they are vainly in quest of it in the pleasures or wealth of a present world, and therefore meet with mortifying disappointment. The wicked and ungodly who love sin, and hate holiness, in vain desire to obtain it; for while they continue in their vicious courses, they are counteracting the goodness of God, and become the destroyers of their own happiness. The Christian who is in covenant with God, has seen the vanity of this world and the value of the next. He is acquainted with the springs of real enjoyment. He has made choice of God in Christ as his portion, and has experienced a satisfaction which he wishes to be continued and perfected. He has tasted the pleasures of devotion and communion with God, and the loss of the perishing pleasures of time would give him little uneasiness, were he assured of the continuance and perfection of the enjoyment of God. Although he has seen something of his beauty, and felt his power in the sanctuary, yet he earnestly desires to see and to feel more, and cannot be satisfied with any thing short of seeing God as he is. He, therefore, even in this world, desires a better country, even an heavenly; for this one thing he desires of the Lord, and this he will seek to obtain, that all days of his life he may dwell in



the house of the Lord, to behold his beauty, and to inquire in his temple. Is this the desire of the Christian, and where can he find any solid hope for its accomplishment, but in this sure and well-ordered covenant? It is the everlasting covenant alone that secures everlasting life. The incorruptible inheritance is the inalienable property of every believer comprehended in its inviolable bond. His hope of glory depends, not upon his personal obedience or pious deeds, but upon the purpose and promise of God, the stability of the covenant, and the infinite merit of Christ, who purchased it by his precious blood. These are the foundations upon which the Christian's hope of future glory rests,—foundations firm as the strength of Jehovah, and immovable as the pillars of his throne. As God in this covenant has pledged himself to be the Christian's God and portion, so nothing can separate him from his everlasting love. This opens a safe and comfortable passage through death and the grave to the mansions of prepared glory. He knows that the ark of the covenant is in the Jordan of death before him. When he approaches it, though it should be overflowing all its banks, and appear dark and threatening, it shall not destroy him. It shall gently divide, affording him a safe and easy passage into the promised land. This is the rod and staff which supports him; for when the union between his soul and body is about to be broken—when he is ready to close his eyes upon all that is dear to him in this world, he knows that he shall depart, not as a setting sun, but as a sun to arise and shine in a purer sky. In the moment, therefore, of dissolving nature, this covenant supports him. With rapture he beholds glory in reserve, and ready to be revealed, and in the triumph of humble faith exclaims, “Al-

though my heart and flesh faint and fail, yet God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever; for this God is my God, for ever and ever; he will be my guide even unto death, and after it my exceeding great reward." Say, now, what more can the heart of man desire, or the soul of man enjoy than is comprehended and secured unto the Christian in this well-ordered and everlasting covenant? Well, therefore, may he, in every circumstance and situation of life, say concerning it, that it is all his salvation and all his desire.

We shall therefore now conclude with some improvement of what has been delivered.

1st. From what has been said you may see the astonishing condescension of God, and the amazing love of Jesus Christ. As we had violated the first covenant by sin, God might in justice have inflicted upon us the awful penalty. But his thoughts are not as our thoughts. In the midst of deserved wrath he visited us with undeserved mercy. How gracious and condescending in him to enter into another and a better covenant with us, and how gracious in our Redeemer to become the surety of it, and to engage for us when he knew that the undertaking would cost him his life! This covenant, ratified by his blood, is now established upon better promises than the first, for it secures eternal life unto all who believe. If it would be astonishing condescension in any prince, through the mediation of another, to enter into a treaty of peace with his rebellious subjects, and not only to pardon them, but to receive them into his favour, and to raise them to higher honour than ever they had enjoyed, how infinitely greater condescension in God to reconcile sinners unto himself by Jesus Christ, and to bestow upon them eternal life!

Behold what manner of love is this, that we should be called the sons of God! and if sons, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ! This is love too wonderful to express, or even to conceive.

2d. From this subject let every one be led to inquire, whether or not God has made this covenant with him, or whether he has by faith taken hold of it, as offered unto him in the gospel. Many of you have professed to do so by taking one of the seals of it into your hands. Let not this, however, satisfy you; for many, we are assured, will say unto Christ in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not eaten and drunken in thy presence, and hast thou not taught in our streets?" To whom he will declare, "Depart from me, I never knew you." Inquire, therefore, with the greatest care whether or not you have been enlightened in the knowledge of the nature and constitution of this covenant—whether or not you have cordially consented unto it in all its parts, and acquiesced in that grace-exalting scheme of salvation which it reveals. Have you chosen God in Christ as your portion, and are you placing your entire dependence upon the blood, while you are hoping to enjoy the blessings, of the covenant? Do you cheerfully submit to its discipline, and are you studying to obey its laws? Have you broken your covenant with sin and the world, and are you now saying, What have we to do any more with idols? Are you willing to forego every thing that stands in competition with your duty, and to take up every cross which may be thrown in your way? Have you a greater desire to be sanctified than to be great or wealthy, and do you wish to be holy that you may be happy? Are you breathing after higher degrees in holiness. Forgetting things behind, are you press-



ing forward to those that are before ; and are you deriving your satisfaction and comfort from the views of your own interest in this covenant, saying, it is all your salvation and all your desire ? If this be really your character, and these are your feelings, then you have reason to conclude that you have interest in it, and to rejoice in the Lord your God. “ Happy art thou, O Israel ; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord ? He is the shield of thy strength, and the sword of thine excellency.”

3d. While from this subject we learn the happiness and privileges of the people of God, we may also see their corresponding obligation to duty, and how much they ought to guard against criminal backsliding, or departing from the Lord their God. Has God made a covenant with his people ? Is not the engagement mutual ? Have they not, in strength of covenant grace, devoted themselves unto the Lord their God ? Have you not done so this day in the most solemn manner ? O, therefore, beware of an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the Lord. You have bound yourselves to be faithful unto death. Recollect the solemn manner in which you did so at the table of the Lord. What sighs then filled your breasts ! what sorrow filled your hearts ! How did you bewail past transgressions, and what tender protestations did you make of future obedience ! What meltings did you then experience,—what hatred did you feel at sin, and love to the Saviour ! Did you not call Christ your master and beloved, your deliverer, your portion and all ? And will you rise from supper and go, Judas-like, to betray your Lord ? Will you basely betray the Son of Man with a kiss of profession ? Will you violate those sacred engagements made at the altar of the Lord, and in the presence

of angels and of men? No: in dependence upon the grace of the covenant, be steadfast and immovable; be humble—be self-denied; abide in Christ, and live by faith, that you may bring forth much fruit. Strengthened by his grace, encounter every danger; encouraged by his example, with intrepid steps tread the path of duty; and, animated with the prospect of future glory, hold on your way rejoicing, even unto the end. The struggle will be short, and the rich reward is the crown of life; for to them that overcome will he grant to sit with him on his throne, even as he hath overcome, and is now set down with his Father on his throne.

4th, and to conclude. From what has been said we may also see the sin and danger of all those who despise the covenant, and impiously trample its blood under foot. They are living under the accumulated guilt of all their sins, subject to the tyranny of their lusts and passions, and exposed every moment to everlasting misery. They may say in their ignorance and pride that they have made a covenant with death, and that with hell they are at an agreement; but this is gross delusion, for the hail and the rain shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow their hiding-place. The wrath of God, the Scripture assures us, abideth on them, and if they continue impenitent and unbelieving, it will come upon them to the uttermost. In what a dreadful and dangerous state are they living! How can they be happy against whom the face of the Almighty is set? When they lie down at night they know not but they may awake in misery against the morning, or when they arise in the morning they know not but they may lie down in sorrow before night. Is not this a dreadful and alarming situation? The

only difference between them and those who have died in their sins is, that these are prisoners of despair, from whom hope is for ever gone, while they continue prisoners of hope. Happy difference! O that they would be persuaded to prize and to improve it. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. Listen, then, to the voice of God, and to the calls of his grace. "Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even to-day do I declare, that I will render double unto thee. Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness: I bring near my righteousness, and my salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory. Incline," therefore, "your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Then shall you experience the satisfaction and comfort which are derived from it in every situation; for then you will be able to say, in health and sickness, in prosperity and adversity, in life and death, that it is all your salvation and all your desire. Amen.

THE END.



**J. DAVIE**

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